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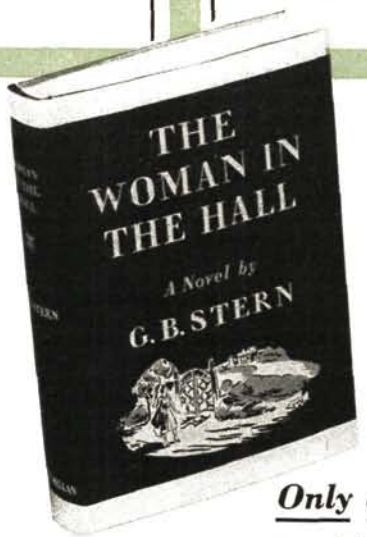

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Humors and Careers

BY LEONARD BACON

James Thurber

E. B. White

Pinchot

Ogden Nash

THE fact is so evident that one begins to believe it. Something is loose in what we euphemistically call this republic, and, as far as the writer is concerned, something entirely welcome. It is a new kind of figure in our contemporary literature and fortunately there are several of them. A decade ago they began appearing diffidently as snowdrops, to which they otherwise bear little resemblance, in the manicured parterres of periodicals which tell you confidentially about mass-produced articles of dress intended to give you an air of individual distinction. The newcomers amused us from the first, but we hardly recognized how rapidly they grew in skill, or how insidiously our own interest in them increased. In fact things reached such a pitch that a number of *The New Yorker* whose tone was not chastened by their wit or their fancy was just about what the smart matron deserves.

The young men (they were really young then, the oldest having barely crashed thirty) seemed to find no particular attraction in political shibboleths or economic clichés, but it wouldn't be wise or safe to call them escapists. They bent perhaps occasionally to some zephyr of doctrine. But they did not traffic in battle-cries, which was an enormous relief. Delicious mirth they could waken at all times by devices now grotesque, now fanciful. And on top of that they were governed by a novel sort of youthful wisdom which was really wise, and which by some eccentric privilege the fates have permitted them to retain in spite of "hair that thins and paunches that don't." I don't mean that they have yet got into the class of "the faun with the bald spot." They never will, either. But they have been able to keep, in spite of everything these mean years have seen, a bright, level-headed, youthful outlook. And that is a charming thing. To this day when no one would call them beginners, no matter what trouble they've seen, they have something of the air of intelligent, pleasant, and wholly reasonable children, whose eager and exact observation may be better than a crusty and blunted experience. From the beginning they could waltz rings round veterans who unhappily had learned nothing from battles and panics, from slow routine or sudden death. A mind that is critical in the proper sense of the word is independent of years. I for one hope they stay that way.

The literary world is a good deal like an old-fashioned army, full of colonels and majors who believe in the necessary virtues of seniority. The ghastly possibility that there may be a marshal's bâton in the kit of some shavetail is anathema to field-officers, and accordingly they have invented a formula by means of which they can eliminate an uncomfortable thought from minds sufficiently troubled already. The method is simple and easy. They treat the brilliant youngster as if he were a public entertainer talented in his way, merely a bright playboy with a gift for the wisecrack. They may quote him with Himalayan condescension, but what they intend is to patronize him into obscurity. To fall back on a cliché, the horrible thing about it is that it works. And I venture to suggest with the diffidence of a senior, who awaits the ministrations of the "benzine-board," that it ought to be stopped. It is time that people ceased talking about the triumvirate who are the subjects of this article, as if they were slightly unsuccessful competitors of Alec Woollcott, Walter Winchell, and Miss Elsa Maxwell. They are more than conversational conveniences to pour into the gaping silences of a dying party, however much hostesses who never have read them may bless their names. For all the stealthy art with which they endeavor to look ephemeral and unimportant, they waken thought as well as many a belly-laugh. And I for one am grateful for James Thurber, for E. B. White, and for Ogden Nash.

This paper does not pretend to be an exhaustive study of their form and pressure. Nevertheless, I may be permitted a few generalities in a good cause. Superficially the three may resemble other humorists who from time to time divert us. But they differ altogether from the wits who labor amusingly about Hollywood or Eddie Guest or other contemporary absurdities, because they are sub-

Next Week

AMERICA'S SILVER AGE
By GERALD W. JOHNSON
Reviewed by Allan Nevins

FINNEGANS WAKE
By JAMES JOYCE
Reviewed by Paul Rosenfeld

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terraneously preoccupied with more permanent and troublesome considerations. They are not concerned with conventional likes and dislikes. They do not gibe at highbrows or throw custard pies at Rotarians. They do not belong to a clique with hatchets sharpened for other cliques or for mankind in general. On the contrary, they are prepared to get on pretty well with the universe, but are disturbed by perversities in their environment, which they are apt to criticize with easy irony and sharp good sense. There is little trace in their writings of the bitter snarl which one has overheard in a group of their competitors who have been correctly described as "the House of Hangover." And though they are all three "as American as corn-liquor" or Mark Twain, they are no more derivative than arbutus or Artemus Ward. In spite of an earnest endeavor on my part to connect them with familiar essayists and poets, it seems impossible to bracket them with anything in the past, whether at the breakfast table of not wholly forgotten autocrats, or in the conning-towers of more recent colyumists.

The fact is that their hold on us is rather a special one. They are interested in resistances and inferiorities. They are uneasy critters—like the rest of us. As one of them put it: "They sit on the edge of the chair of literature. In the House of Life they have the feeling that they have never taken off their overcoats." Nevertheless, one sees them pretty frequently in their shirtsleeves. And enough about them is known from their writings to give point to another of Mr. Thurber's observations: "The little wheels of their invention are set in motion by the damp hand of melancholy." Diffidently and apologetically, but never sentimentally, they write about the ridiculously dangerous, and the absurdly problematic. And at their gayest and most fantastic the reader discovers that they are dreeing some personal weird. Yet they avoid the bathos of the conventional tearful eyes that look out from the comic mask. By special privilege they are permitted to distill "public diversion from private anxiety."

A year or two ago Max Eastman's "Enjoyment of Laughter" was sent me to review. I'm still of the opinion that the book is not Mr. Eastman's best, but it had the virtue of containing Mr. Thurber's definition of humor, which according to me has considerable muzzle-velocity and penetration. "Humor," said Mr. Thurber, "is a kind of emotional chaos told about calmly and quietly in retrospect." The remark is a travesty of Wordsworth's definition of poetry and is loose and even clumsy. But it does throw light on the subject and it had the effect of making this writer prick up his Midas ears. It would seem that humor really is a sort of organization of the inchoate, an attempt to assemble the incongruous. Perhaps I may exaggerate the importance of the observation, but never since have I failed to find ore, to me precious, in the two-page outbursts which come too rarely now in *The New Yorker*.

A writer perpetually prying in his own insides was bound to fall foul of the Psychological Racket. It is not absurd to say that Mr. Thurber's attack on it was a public service. The justly famous "Sample Intelligence Test" may look merely as if some one was having fun. But the little essay is, of course, as searching a piece of legitimately destructive criticism as one is apt to stumble on. The merciless taking apart of false pretence by an honorable skeptic who knows exactly what he's talking about, remains a gorgeous spectacle. Thousands of people must for the first time have realized what woolly terms popular psychologists prefer and with what confidence "they measure what they cannot define." The unkind may even have formed an opinion that the psychologists' definition of intelligence would pan out to be "an aggregation of fortunate mental qualities which psychologists alone possess." Every one of the essays in which Mr. Thurber deals with the egregious exploiters of the hopes and fears of unfortunate people whose trouble is as real as their powers are mediocre, is alive with observations, which, if they were in an official classic, would be daily cited with the respect they deserve. Such cracks as "Sixty minutes of thinking of any kind is bound to lead to confusion and unhappiness," and "You can't teach an old egoist new persons" ought to larn them to leave his mind alone. Nor can this reader look without admiration on the epilogue to Mr. Thurber's apology for day-dreamers, where in three words he has discriminated the beauty of a passage in Browning, half in mockery, half in pleasure, as no highbrow could, and in such a manner that you are glad he did it. It would appear that Mr. Thurber likes poetry.

Whether he does or no, Mr. White does. Few of his contemporaries, who would not hesitate to call themselves poets, have written such striking music as "The Traveller's Song," which, as far as my information goes, hardly was noticed in its modest seclusion. But he has not succeeded in convincing a public that liked his bright sharp paragraphs in *The New Yorker* that verse is his mêtier. Perhaps it isn't. In general there is a certain lack

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"The Poetry of Circumstance"

CAPTAIN HORATIO HORNBLOWER. By C. S. Forester. Boston: Little, Brown & Company. 1939. $2.
FLYING COLOURS. By C. S. Forester. The Same.

Reviewed by KENNETH PAYSON KEMPTON

MERELY "the poetry of circumstance," Stevenson once called romance. In a rousing adventure story who cares for character? ("Faria is a thing of packthread and Dantès little more than a name.") All the reader wants, he said, is "fit and striking incident," action "where the interest turns, not . . . on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life." He was writing of Scott.

Cecil Scott Forester has never been content with this view. His early romances, quick-moving and exciting, outreached Stevenson's dogma in a bold attempt to motivate incident in "fit and striking" character, of whatever historical age. The effect was fresh and the man was cheered—perhaps somewhat skeptically, since he seemed to be reaching for the moon. Two years ago came "Beat to Quarters" and last year, "Ship of the Line": chapters in the stormy life of Captain Horatio Hornblower, R.N. The present volume includes these narratives and with a final section, "Flying Colours," (also published separately in a single volume) brings the study to a close. Looking back on the whole story, on the figure as it shaped itself and on all the events chosen to body it forth, it is possible now to consider how far Forester's defiance will get him.

The time is that of the Napoleonic Wars. Sealed orders send Hornblower's *Lydia* round the Horn on a venture commercial as well as military, and the resulting battle, half lost and half won, sets the key of the entire story. Home again and penniless, Hornblower is given the *Sutherland* and convoy duty in the Mediterranean; his subsequent raids on Napoleonic Spain are ended by capture. Headed for a Vincennes firing squad with his First Lieutenant Bush and his Coxswain Brown, Hornblower escapes from the coach bearing them across France and in a homemade punt cruises disguised down the Loire to Nantes, retakes a British cutter, and rejoins the fleet—having long since been given up for dead—in a modest triumph.

That is the outline, frankly episodic and unilateral; and though it is usually interesting and often thrilling, it simply doesn't matter. Almost consistently our interest turns on precisely what Stevenson said it needn't: "the passionate slips and hesitations" of a human spirit. It is Hornblower that matters. His game of whist with midshipmen while lying in wait for a ship of twice his tonnage; his grief over that presentation sword, surrendered to Spaniards and returned to him stripped of its gold; his boyish delight in a swimming party, with nine naked shellbacks, bent on burning a merchantman; his removal of the ligatures from Bush's wound; the cruise of the punt, the delicate balance between discipline and expediency when our captain, our "hero," proves the worst camper and the feeblest waterman—these inward conflicts are more compelling than any mere "shock of arms" could be, for of course they go deeper. No romantic ethical causality reigns here. No climax distracts with artificial pattern: the great sea-fight comes in the middle of "Beat to Quarters," brisk action spreads almost continuously through "Ship of the Line," and in the final section it so happens that the most stirring physical events occur early. But what compels the reader to keep reading, a realistic curve of far greater significance, is the cumulative impact on Hornblower of himself and of other men. And the grand climax is his emergence as a living man.

I said "almost consistently." One phase alone is disappointing. There is sex in the book, as by Forester's realistic creed there would have to be. You will recall that Stevenson, and Walter Scott for that matter, merely looked the other way. It was the highest hurdle, apparently. Forester clears it, not cleanly or honestly, but looking all elbows and knees, by old-style *cliché*. "A man whom women love easily"?—this painfully shy, angular introvert who covers unease with harsh words and is tempted to giggle in moments of stress? "A man whom women love easily"?—this naval captain who lies with his wife while clammily yearning for another's, who almost perfunctorily seduces a third lady (the daughter-in-law of his French host), and returns home after long absence to find the wife conveniently dead and the mistress (she is Wellington's sister) magically eager? No. Hornblower the lover is neither picaresque rogue nor romantic hero, he is neither sound romance nor convincing reality.

There may be an omen here. Perhaps it is impossible, in this important respect, to do the job that Forester has set out so bravely and so intelligently to do. The fact is, women have no place in this story: Lady Barbara's appearance aboard the *Lydia* is barely plausible, a sop to convention; Hornblower's wavering between her and his Maria through the latter half of the book seems (since he is far from both and unlikely to see either again) more than dragged in; and the casual affair with the Vicomtesse, flatly unconvincing, was too evidently contrived only to enliven a dull winter while the punt was being built. Perhaps Stevenson was nearer right after all, and this is what he meant by proscribing "the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience." The fact that Romance still carries generally the flavor of unreal, conventional love that it has held since the Middle Ages, shows a reader predilection that may be unconquerable. Perhaps no mere realist can debunk that side of historical fiction.

This remains Forester's problem. But at least one of his heartiest admirers, having an eye on the very few fables that are great because they achieve the impossible, is knocking wood.

"Sealed orders send Hornblower's *Lydia* round the Horn on a venture commercial as well as military, and the resulting battle, half lost and half won, sets the key of the entire story" . . . (Jacket design by N. C. Wyeth.)

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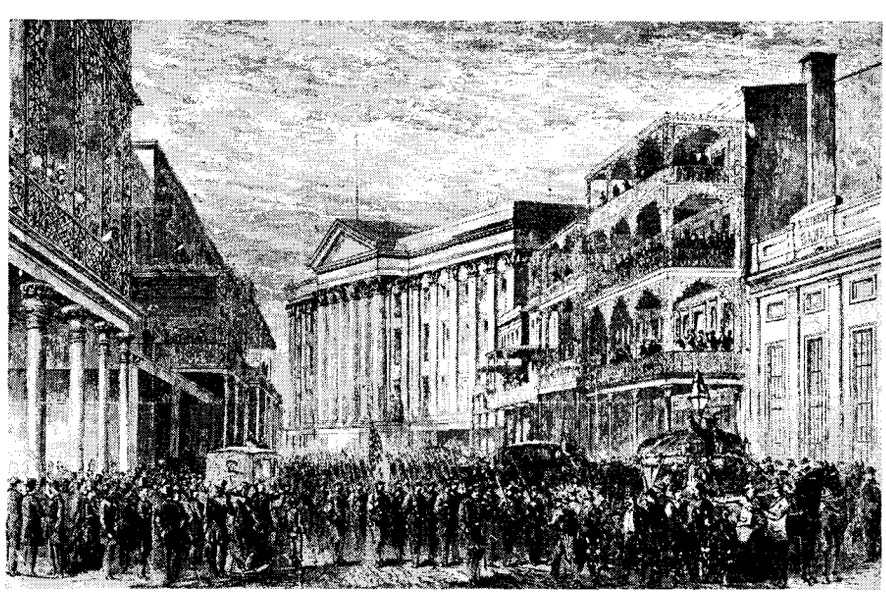
The Early Klan

INVISIBLE EMPIRE: A History of the Ku Klux Klan 1866-1871. By Stanley F. Horn. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1939. $3.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

THOUGH the picturesque organization which did so much to loosen the grip of Carpetbagger and Scalawag on the South has been the subject of a vast deal of attention, until now it has never had a satisfactory historian. A Congressional Committee devoted thirteen huge volumes of testimony to its work. Every writer on Reconstruction in this or that State has given a chapter or section to it. Novels have been written about it, the best by Tourgee and Miss Krey and the worst by Thomas Dixon. Two or three rather sketchy histories have appeared. But it has remained for the editor of the *Southern Lumberman*, after several years of hard research, to publish a history that is well organized, thorough, judicious in tone, and interesting throughout its four hundred pages.

Given the oppression that the Radical Reconstructionists fastened upon the South, the Ku Klux Klan was as inevitable a phenomenon as the Carbonari in Italy, the Liberty Boys in late colonial times, or the Fenians in Ireland. Its history was as spectacular, as full of dread and gruesome incidents, and as instructive to the authors of misgovernment as theirs. Mr. Horn tells with authentic new detail the story of its organization in Pulaski, Tenn., and makes it clear that Nathaniel Bedford Forrest—despite denials by his biographer—was certainly its Grand-Wizard. He shows that in some parts of the South, notably Mississippi, the Klan had two phases, dying down at the end of 1868, and then springing into violent life again in 1870. He traces the Klan from state to state; describes kindred organizations, like the Knights of the White Camelia; tells the story of the Congressional inquiry, a dragnet affair which brought out a weird variety of witnesses; and relates how, when its work was fairly accomplished, the Klan died. Many of his stories are extraordinary. He tells of the scene in 1868 when Ben Butler held up on the floor of Congress the bloodstained night-shirt in which a Mississippi Carpetbagger named Huggins had been whipped within an inch of his life; the incident giving rise to the phrase "bloody shirt." He narrates what happened at Meridian when some Radical Republicans tried "Ku Kluxing" the Democrats. In Arkansas, as he recalls, a Ku Klux squad devoutly prayed over a spy before putting him to death. It is evident that Mr. Horn thinks that the Klan was on the whole justified, and did a useful work in some communities. But he does not flinch from treating —and condemning—its many unjustifiable outrages. An appendix gives the Klan's "prescript" or constitution.



Sheridan enters New Orleans following Reconstruction riots. (From "Adventures of America" by John Kouwenhoven: Harpers.)

Danger Zone

POLAND: KEY TO EUROPE. By Raymond Leslie Buell. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1939. $3.

Reviewed by HENRY C. WOLFE

WHEN this book was started, all eyes were upon Czecho-Slovakia. Poland, so it seemed, enjoyed relative security from German attack. And not a few Americans believed that the Poles were secretly allied with the Nazis. Many of us had almost forgotten the perennial problems surrounding Pomorze (the so-called Polish Corridor). Few on this side of the Atlantic knew about the tense relations between Germans and Poles along their common border. After Munich only brief dispatches told of the clash between the Reich and Poland over the important railway junction of Bogumin (Oderberg). Consequently, the American public was hardly prepared for the sudden Nazi diplomatic offensive against Poland in March.

Ever since Poland's rebirth in 1918, she has been an important state. This is partly owing to her geographic position, but it is also because she is one of the largest countries in Europe west of Russia and because her population is fifth largest on the Continent. Today, Poland is truly, as Mr. Buell says, the key to Europe. In fact, the peace of Europe depends in no small measure on what Poland may do in the coming weeks.

This book is an effort to give not only the political background of Poland, but her economic and social aspects. A vast amount of work has gone into its preparation: consultation and study in Poland, laborious checking of statements, boiling down vast amounts of statistics, choosing the material to be used, and indexing it. The result is a volume that was sorely needed by all who want to get behind the European headlines and find out what the issues are in the German-Polish dispute.

Dr. Buell begins his volume with a description of Poland's historical background. In past centuries Poland's geographical position was no less dangerous than it is today. Then, as now, she had to face danger in two directions. After the World War the new Polish state started under terrific handicaps: an empty treasury, devastated areas, famine, and enemies on most of her frontiers. Time has solved some of these problems, but Poland still has to provide for two outstanding needs: "security against foreign aggression and security against internal want." For her open borders enclose a country which cannot support its increasing population. The economic conditions are rendered more difficult because of the economic nationalism rampant in the world today. Poland cannot send her surplus population to colonies, because she has none. And immigration laws in other countries close this avenue of exodus to Polish immigrants. Also, there are the difficulties inherent in Poland's minorities.

Here is a volume that is at once timely and authentic. It is a conscientious effort to appraise and interpret situations that are of the utmost importance to the world today.

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Satire and Tragedy

HERE LIES: The Collected Stories of Dorothy Parker. New York: The Viking Press. 1939. $3.

Reviewed by RUTH MCKENNEY

I THINK the legend of Dorothy Parker, the wit and the fun-maker, should be settled for once and for all with the publication of her collected stories. Humorists are all very well in their place but I think a great and serious talent should not be debased by reminiscent chuckles of laughter. For all I know Dostoievsky kept his intimates in stitches. Dorothy Parker is no more a public wit than the bitter Russian.

For Mrs. Parker strips our society down to its festering bones, rips aside the sheltering curtains of the cruel and respectable. I suppose the technical name for Mrs. Parker's writing is "satire"—and yet it seems a faltering word for the passionate and caustic tales set down in this book. Mrs. Parker has pity and indignation and a terrible, almost painful warmth, so that tragedy underlies the acid.

I know that there is a large and weighty school of thought which finds Mrs. Parker very *fin de siècle*, very decadent, as well as very great and very expert. I don't understand that at all. There is not a story in the new book which does not ring with protest, and a few of them are written in fire. The violence of "The Custard Heart" is almost frightening—it assaults the reader with its rage, and I cannot see how a moderately sensitive person can live through the story of the lady who was wistful even in her bathroom and not feel like yelling for the tumbrils.

Naturally every Dorothy Parker reader has favorites among the famous stories. I like least the facile tales of the gentlemen recovering from hangovers, the dialogues in speakeasies. The savage stories of "Little Curtis" and "Clothe the Naked" and "Wonderful Old Gentleman" make the slighter tales seem a little faded. Mrs. Parker writes of the Negro with especial power—her Negro characters have strength and dignity; their fate is suggested with real ferocity.

The story on Spain requires, I think, special mention. "Soldiers of the Republic" employs a very different technique from even the most powerful of the other stories. Here the attack is turned on the narrator—and by implication on all bystanders in all great human struggles. "Soldiers of the Republic" must be uncomfortable reading for anyone who did not and does not stand ready to give himself for truth and justice. I believe it is Mrs. Parker's finest short story, because it is the most direct and the most passionate.

I am always impatient with critics who set up great cheers about a writer's "style." The best style is of course the least noticeable—style is only a means to an end. And yet no comment on Mrs. Parker's short stories can be complete without stating the flat fact that no other English writer uses the short story form so perfectly. Mrs. Parker's short stories are not stunted novels, chopped-off tales that should have grown and prospered. Their economy is inherent in the material itself—an extra paragraph, even an extra word, would destroy the whole design.

Under a single cover, now, is the best prose work of one of the important writers of the period. The only major fault I can find, after reading the collected stories, is their number. Most writers, even the very good ones, overwork themselves. But Mrs. Parker should be locked in her study and fed bread and water until she produces twice again as many stories as she has in her new volume.

Ruth McKenney is the author of "My Sister Eileen" and "Industrial Valley."

Golden Age

AUTOBIOGRAPHY WITH A DIFFERENCE. By R. H. Mottram. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. $3.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

THERE is no question that R. H. Mottram's autobiography is properly qualified "with a Difference," for it is scarcely an autobiography at all. There is almost as much whimsy as fact, more sociology than narrative, a more scrupulous endeavor to reconstruct the golden days of pre-war Norfolk and Norwich than to outline a life. When the novelist was a small boy he once leafed through a picture-book called in East Anglian dialect a "Book of Gays," each page a simple or somewhat fanciful picture designated "The Home," "The Ship," "The Workman," "The King," "The Doctor," etc. The author professes that these pictures made an ineffaceable impression upon him and that he saw them against the background of his happy and fortunate childhood. The chapter headings of the autobiography are the titles of the pictures. Each essay-like chapter begins with a description of the picture; then the picture is interpreted in terms of life in Norwich in the 1880's and '90's, and finally there is an analysis of social or economic significance and evolution in the fields suggested by the drawing—in problems of labor, industry, family solidarity, the function of royalty, domestic architecture, social unrest. The framework is unique and adequately supports an imponderous, almost fragile, body of reminiscence.

Many modern novelists have emerged from law, journalism, and medicine, but Mottram is one of the very few who have turned writer after many years' experience as a banker. His father as well as his grandfather had been chief clerk in Gurney's Bank, and the Mottrams had

R. H. Mottram

lived for a century in the enormous house over the Bank. The author grew up in an atmosphere of kindliness, tolerance, optimism, and impeccable honesty. The big, charming, inefficient house was full of books, music, and pictures; the front windows opened upon the bustling street scene; the parents were wise, human, and cultured—there is small wonder that Mottram looks back upon his own childhood with great nostalgia, and that he is led, unwisely perhaps at times, to generalize about the golden age. But golden age it was to him, and he successfully captures its charm, beauty, and rock-like sense of security and permanence. The World War destroyed most of it, and however destructive the next war may be, it can never be so tragic, for there will be less that is fine to destroy.

There is little indication that the Autobiography is that of a literary man. Mottram does not mention 'The Spanish Farm," which won him the Hawthornden Prize in 1925, his other novels, his topographical works, or his economic histories. We read nothing of his intimacy with Galsworthy and other leading literary lights, but a great deal about the cook, the gas-fitter, the cabman, and the carpenter. There are only incidental references to his five years in the army and to his journeys over the world. As a matter of fact, Mottram is the least Bohemian of writers: he avoids literary clubs and cliques and lives in Norwich, writing, gardening, and hobnobbing with his lifelong friends and neighbors.

"Autobiography with a Difference" is a small masterpiece, written as are the author's novels, with lucidity, balance, and intelligence. The influence of Galsworthy (freely admitted by Mottram) is evident in the understatement, the quietness, the sharp response to beauty and fortitude, and the earnest attempt to understand as well as condemn the discreditable and ignoble. In spite of the author's sociological bent the autobiography is, in Galsworthy's own phrase, highly humanized history, another precious recapturing of the past.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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Neither Prurients Nor Prudes

Two Letters

DEAR AUTHOR:—You are writing a novel of American life and your imagination is exploring the innumerable intimacies of thought and emotion and experience which lie so close to the surface of conventional reality. Born and bred in the fast departing shadow of an age of reticence, you feel a compulsion to assert your independence of prohibitions. Where the scene goes, you will follow, whether to the self-confession of desires not spoken aloud, or to the bedroom, or to the lavatory. Others have been there before you, but that does not lessen your sense that the whole life of men and women in your town has not been recorded, and that you are nominated by destiny to tell all the truth. You are right, of course. The American novelist of the nineteenth century wrote under limitations which, fortunately for him, were not too strongly felt, because what lay beyond the boundaries of taboo did not seem to him highly important. He found life rich enough without pursuing it into the jungle of biology. But you, sensitive to the revelations of psychology, doubtful of the meaning of morals, have a compulsion to rewrite his plots in terms not permitted to your ancestors, and with expansions which, if they would not interest them, seem vital to you.

Go to it. Every generation of writers in every country creates, or imitates, it is hard sometimes to say which, a new man. And it is equally true, of course, that every generation of writers has to explore a new environment of ideas as well as of circumstances. Yet, while the psychological climate changes, the reporter thereof must still work with the same instruments of expression. What conditioned success for the Greeks and medievals, still measurably conditions success for him. Telling truth as you saw or guessed it, has never been enough for literature. You must make the reader feel it to be true; in the case of fiction, feel it to be reality, and here the slightest overemphasis, and, still more, the least failure of language to mean to others what it means to you, will be disastrous to the excellence, if not to the commercial success, of your book.

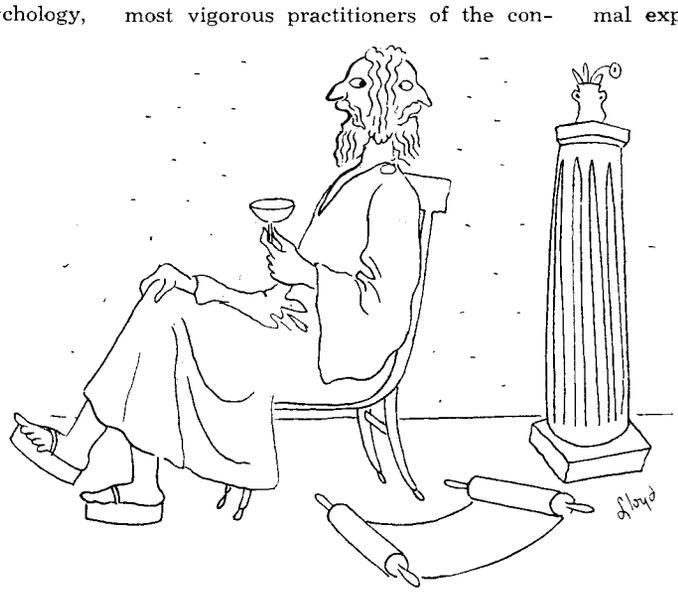
The impulse to challenge, must, therefore, be resisted. It is not your business to propagandize for four-letter words. It is your business to make their use, if you use them, so inevitable that they are not challenging, but right. It is your business to observe a due proportion, lest in bringing back into fiction what happens in the bedroom, what is said at the bar, and what is thought in the relaxed hours of the night, you slur by underemphasis what happens when the mood is exalted, what is said when the intellect is in control, what is thought when we have the right to call ourselves civilized. There is an old rule for writers which may be useful here. Clumsy experimenters in the colloquial load their sentences with slurred vowels and broken consonants. This may be right enough for science, but not for art, which works by suggestion, and achieves a truth to experience by a few divergences from standard pronunciation. So it is with the use of language and situation which escapes from the old taboos. It was naive rather than daring for John Steinbeck, in his remarkable "Grapes of Wrath," to keep the reader always reminded of the natural functions of animal man. Not the inartistic and unnecessary repetitions of scenes and phrases more familiar in the care of young children than in adult fiction, but something incomparably more valuable, makes his book outstanding.

DEAR READER:—Or shall we say, dear old-fashioned reader. Your taste is, on the whole, sounder than that of the most vigorous practitioners of the contemporary novel; but you must do something about your nerves. It is not, I believe, the recent invasion of fiction by the sex life of the individual that offends you. Statistics prove that both honest intimacies and dishonest pruriencies are successful on a large scale with the most conservative readers, provided that the visual imagination is kept in check, and the language held within the bounds of a decent vagueness. Particularly the language. You have been accustomed to think, you have even been accustomed to speak, the plain facts of sensory, and especially sexual, existence; but you have not been accustomed to read them in words that were intended to express them. Or rather, you have not been expected to read them in your own words of your own time—in Elizabethan English, or in French, they may have gone down well enough, for there was no shock of immediate reference, as if this was what your friends were thinking when they called a leg a limb.

Shock has little or no artistic value, and it is your business not to be too easily shocked. You are right to be critical of prurience when you detect it; you are right to be suspicious of the writer who flings his four-letter words about like fork-fulls of manure. But you are wrong if you think that new interests in the psychology and biology of our contemporaries will not bring a new vocabulary with them, or restore an old one. You cannot effectively condition the prurient use of what are called indecent words, if you are still shocked by the honest use of the right term in the right place. If you are going to read the new books on behavior in our era, you must get rid of prudishness, which is not a disease, like prurience, but certainly a dangerous inhibition. Your taste is sound, but you must give it a broader basis, and then apply it rigorously. It is time to stop writing letters about "filth" and "depravity" when all the writer means is that an honest novelist has made the human animal express himself with the accuracy required in order to seem both animal and human.

A new tolerance in language is much needed, if some of our best novelists are to find the audiences they deserve. May I suggest, as a setting-up exercise, the translation into modern colloquial English of one of Falstaff's magnificent invectives? No one since Mr. Bowdler has objected to those invectives; they are an inseparable articulation of Falstaff's compact of wit and grossness; yet translate them into Victorian English, and see what happens! You must allow the novelist his words; if he, and not you, makes them dirty, then damn him.

H. S. C.



"Have you read any good books lately?"

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Letters to the Editor: *Sherlock Holmes in America*

Transplanting Holmes

SIR:—Only a scholar of the stature of H. W. Bell could deal adequately with the shocking discrepancies between the definitive John Murray text of the Sherlock Holmes stories and the bastard versions bearing the American imprimature. The field is a magnificent one for exploration and comment. At least ten of the character names in the tales have been deliberately or carelessly mangled in the process of transplantation; whole passages have been deleted or interpolated, and the name of one of the stories itself has been changed. If Mr. Bell or Vincent Starrett or some other titan of the arena will do nothing about it, my own wrath is such that I shall be tempted soon myself to raise a righteous lance, however feeble, in defense of accuracy and truth.

The greatest liberties of all, of course, have been taken with "The Valley of Fear," where such expletives as "By gosh" become, mysteriously, "By Gar"; where Ettie Shafter and her father are not reëdited from German to Swedish nationality as Doyle decided they should be, and where, by fiat of the American publishers, the Ancient Order of Freeman becomes—in deference undoubtedly to the Irish vote, which might have resented a too-close resemblance to the Hibernian society which is parodied—the *Eminent* Order of Freemen. (The name of the vicious Scowrers themselves was evidently considered sufficiently distinct from the very real Molly Maguires to let it stand unchanged.) An interesting point, which may have escaped the notice of the critics, is that the American editors did not pursue their work of mayhem to consistent completeness in purifying the tale of Birdy Edwards. When Division Master Windle of Merton County Lodge 249 wrote the Vermissa gangsters of the job to be done on Andrew Rae, he signed himself "J. W. Windle, D.M.A.O.F.," which obviously stands for "Division Master, *Ancient* Order of Freemen." The American editors failed, in the fullness of their zeal, to change this signature to "D.M.E.O.F.," and they stand convicted, in consequence, of a dramatic shortcoming in the ruthlessness they otherwise exhibited.

May we not hope that some day an American publisher will have the courage to bring out a Sherlock Holmes omnibus which will abide by the canons as the canons are writ?

EDGAR W. SMITH.

New York City

Fighting Words

SIR:—Who says Britain is "decadent"? Let some American come over here and tell any Britisher that and he'll find himself counting the stars mighty pronto. I would like to hear from some of your readers, about my own age (18), and hear what they think about this country of ours, boys or girls, let 'em all come and if I can't make them think Britain is as progressive, powerful, and as fearless as she always was, then I eat this issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

Now come on, you Yanks, let's hear from you.

ROY PENFOLD.

Longford, Coventry
Warwickshire, England.

"I want something light for an ocean trip."

"The Tyranny of Words"

SIR:—I had just finished reading, belatedly to be sure, Stuart Chase's "The Tyranny of Words" when the following came out of the everywhere into the here—

SEMANTIC SONNET

Vocabulary, memory,
enclose what no man knows.
The Venus Fly-trap kills the bee,
with death its petals close;
and he who holds that in the brain
are cells which keep the thought
is seeking in a haunted fane
where other men have sought,
for both the words are words with room,
syllabic aggregates,
and simply warp upon the loom
whose woof is with the Fates.
There is no sense you will agree
in words of words, in memory.

EDWIN W. TOMLINSON.

Washington, D. C.

Sockalexis

SIR:—Sockalexis. Sockalexis. This is a spirited word used by Mr. William Rose Benét, *SRL* April 15, 1939, page eight, column three, paragraph three.

A student has searched Webster's, Standard, Oxford, N.E.D., and several special dictionaries (including Dakota-Sioux) with no findings.

After a dozen good guesses we decide to ask you for a "copper riveted" definition.

MABEL K. RICHARDSON,
Librarian.

University of South Dakota
Vermillion, S. D.

A rare old crusted American term which is difficult to trace, but was usually applied in a semi-affectionate tone —equivalents, "old bird," "old bozo," "old rummy," etc. The writer recalled it from his youth, in Pennsylvania and New York State.

W. R. B.

Stephen Crane

SIR:—I am writing a critical biography of Stephen Crane. I would appreciate hearing from persons who have any biographical or bibliographical information concerning him. All letters or materials loaned will be carefully handled and promptly returned.

REES J. FRESCOLN, JR.

George School, Pa.

Zachary Taylor

SIR:—Would any of your readers be able to give me information about the career of General Zachary Taylor? I would be especially grateful for details concerning his early life.

SILAS B. MCKINLEY.

506 Olive St.
St. Louis, Mo.

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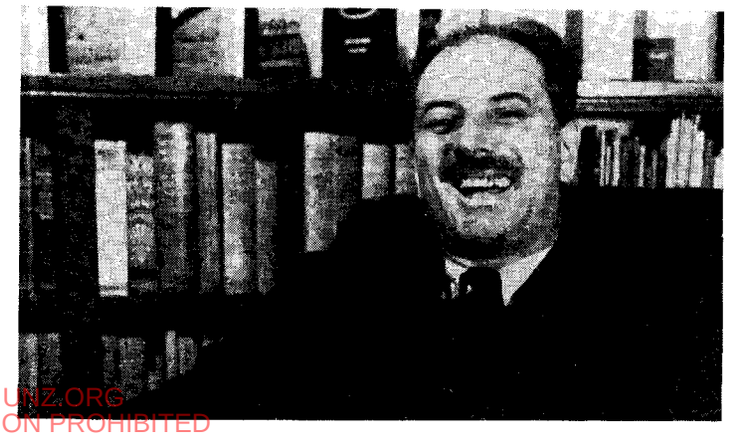
Personal Historian Vincent Sheean, photographed at his publisher's office during a press conference. His eyewitness account of Europe in 1938, "Not Peace but a Sword," is coming in June.

John P. Marquand (see page 12), author of "Wickford Point," plays with Mickey, his wire-haired terrier, in his Beekman Place back yard on the East River, New York City. . . . (Right) W. Somerset Maugham on a recent visit to America. His new novel, "Christmas Holiday," will be out in the fall.

Eve Curie (above, left), author of "Madame Curie," during a busy American lecture tour, talks to interviewers. . . . (Below) Bess Streeter Aldrich, recently in New York from her Nebraska home.

After Faith Baldwin (above) signed a lifetime contract with Farrar & Rinehart, they presented her with six homing pigeons—which she decided not to take on her trip to New Zealand. Miss Baldwin's latest novel is "Career by Proxy" (see page 30). . . . William Lyon Phelps (below) autographs five hundred copies of his "Autobiography with Letters" for his friends.

Lewis Mumford (below), at his publisher's office following publication of his latest book—on what to do about fascism—"Men Must Act."
(Saturday Review News Pictures of the month by Robert Disraeli)



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A Reader's Almanac

BY DONALD GORDON

MAY 1st

☞The May Day offerings include two novels providing a choice between comedy and melodrama. Occasional chuckles are to be found in the thrashings of a young man who can't comb a tantalizing gal from his hair in *Angry Man's Tale,* a first novel by Peter de Polnay, who is by no means sloppy. We'll forego any comment on the aptitude of the title. ☞Otto Schisgall's *Swastika* is a story about an American girl's first visit to the home of her German-born husband, who becomes quite sold on the Nazi idea. It is to be observed that it's no trick at all to build a dramatic story with modern German background. How can you miss? ☞Also *Napoleon in Review,* new estimate by George G. Andrews.

MAY 2nd

☞Jerome Ellison's toughy, *The Prisoner Ate A Hearty Breakfast,* has a hero who is more than slightly florid, but it's a fast-moving yarn. ☞*Drama At Dusk,* by Arna Bontemps, story of slave uprising in Santo Domingo after the French Revolution.

MAY 4th

☞*Letters of Askance* by Christopher Morley is the best of his Bowling Green pieces and other essays in handsome binding for library and bedroom tables. ☞Ethel Lina White (*The Wheel Spins*) has a new one for the chill department in *Step in the Dark.* ☞For the star item under this date we give you James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* the long-awaited opus which, according to the date-line, has engaged him for seventeen years. Had we not been solemnly assured by those who ought to know that Mr. Joyce is a very serious writer, we'd say that obviously it was written to frustrate Gertrude Stein beyond recovery. After the first two paragraphs the lino operator apparently expired on his keyboard.

MAY 5th

☞*You're the Doctor* by Victor G. Heiser, follows up the celebrated Odyssey with an Iliad of the digestive system and other difficulties. Good reading, too. ☞You'll probably be seeing the result of Truman Bailey's *Polynesian Venture* in department store show windows. He went to the East for design suggestions, found more of what he wanted in the islands of Oceania . . . ☞Whodunit addicts can list Clyde Clason's *Murder Gone Minoan.* ☞In view of the present widespread vogue for swing slang, Paul Engle might have found a better title for his book of verse than *Corn.* ☞*Mrs. Pennington,* a first novel by Katharine Carson, family story with midwest setting in the Chautauqua days. ☞*Katia,* novel about Czar Alexander II and lady love by Princess Marthe Bibesco.

MAY 6th

☞*Purslane* by Bernice Kelly Harris: good earth and better local color in the Old North State when Tarheels never would be share croppers.

MAY 8th

☞Andrew Loomis's *Fun with a Pencil* makes drawing as simple as it can be made.

MAY 9th

☞Reviews of the day will be given to Townsend Scudder's biography of *Jane Welsh Carlyle.* They should be good.

MAY 10th

☞Not forgetting Emil Ludwig's first novel in many years, *Quartet,* among the day's publications, we'll take one of the fastest murder mysteries to breeze across the desk in a long time. F. G. Presnell, of whom we know nothing, has turned out *Send Another Coffin.* It's a schnooksie!

MAY 12th

☞*We Shall Live Again* by Maurice Hindus. Mr. Hindus had been in Czecho-Slovakia for many months gathering material for a comprehensive book about that country when, in late September, the fuss broke right around his ears. It's all here in the book and the title indicates the author's conclusion about the Czechs.

MAY 13th

☞By E. Phillips Oppenheim, *Sir Adam Disappeared. . . .* Gee.

MAY 15th

☞Pietro di Donato's novel of Italian-American family life, *Christ in Concrete,* is due sometime during the month after a confusion of dates. It's a hard-biting affair. ☞And for Buck Rogers fans Miss D. E. Stevenson of the darling Buncle stories seems to have turned out *A World in Spell* with a package of reefers. ☞Recommended is a quiet and strangely touching novel by John Herrmann, *The Salesman.* There must be hundreds of thousands like this hero.

MAY 16th

☞*America In Mid-Passage,* the third volume of the Beards' "Rise of American Civilization", is the social and economic history of the United States from 1928 to 1938. It is the June selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club and undoubtedly will be discussed at length by the reviewing fraternity. ☞*Conceived in Liberty* by Howard Fast, story of Valley Forge from the point of view of the men in the ranks. ☞*The Altar-Piece* by Naomi Royde-Smith, murder story without mystery but with plenty of psychological horrors. ☞*The Day of the Locust* by Nathanael West. Author of *Miss Lonelyhearts* has nightmares ar ong the nuts in Hollywood.

MAY 18th

☞The usual first-edition fuss will be on with the publication of *Huntsman, What Quarry?* by Edna St. Vincent Millay. The super-super first autographed edition is priced at $50, the super autographed at $15, the leatherbound first trade edition at $3.00, and (for the scrambling multitude) the regular first trade will be $2.00. . . . Who was it observed that all top ranking contemporary female poets bore the initials E. St. V. M.? ☞And, if you like well-built atmosphere chillers, put on your list *The Edge of Running Water* by William Sloane. ☞For true adventure—adventure by a born story-teller, at least—try *Down Wind* by George Digby. ☞In *Passport for a Girl,* Mary Borden gives low down on upper-class British state of mind from fall of Vienna to Munich.

MAY 19th

☞By all odds the most pretentious novel of the month is *The Bridegroom Cometh* by Waldo Frank. Can't say it bowled us over. ☞For good, salty reminiscence see *Sea Duty* by Rear Admiral Yates Stirling who's been battling on land and sea for a long time. . . . ☞In infinitely lighter vein is Barry Benefield's *April Was When It Began,* a novel about how the fourth assistant editor of the trade book department of a New York publishing house became involved with the family of a little gamin named Dik-Dik. Observations on publishing practices are aces. . . . ☞Daphne du Maurier's sister Angela has a first novel, *The Perplexed Heart.* ☞Or you may read *Making Good Before Forty,* some pre-natal advice by the busy Walter (Direct Your Energy) Pitkin.

MAY 20th

☞It can be reported that the *Photographic Buying Handbook* will save its cost many times to anyone contemplating equipment purchases. The subject is covered comparatively, with brands and prices mentioned. Invaluable to amateur and professional.

MAY 22nd

☞Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism.* Psychological interpretation of Moses as man and religious philosopher. ☞*In Blood and Ink* by Maury Maverick of Texas. Biography of the constitution.

MAY 23rd

☞For short story fans, *The Horse That Could Whistle Dixie* by Jerome Weidman of "I Can Get It for You Wholesale." They're good. ☞Editor H. J. Haskell of the *Kansas City Star,* who has been diving into the history of ancient Rome, comes

(Continued on page 25)

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Do You Know the Brills?

BY J. P. MARQUAND

AMONG the unsolicited comments which I have received concerning my novel "Wickford Point" there are two letters which, for me, stand out above the rest. The first is from a lady in Connecticut.

"I think it is inexcusable," she writes, "that anyone able to write 'The Late George Apley' could stoop to do so worthless, sordid, and dull a book and characters as you draw in 'Wickford Point.'"

The second is a letter to my publishers from a gentleman in Florida.

"I have just finished 'Wickford Point,'" he begins, "one of the most uninteresting books about the most uninteresting people I have ever come across."

Most writers I have encountered are a thin-skinned lot, wearing their hearts upon their sleeves. I share their common proclivity of harboring an unreasoning and instinctive resentment against most adverse criticism, but when someone gets mad enough to pay for stationery and a postage stamp in order to tell you that your book is terrible, at least you have stirred up a definite and not altogether uncomplimentary reader reaction. Incidentally, I have another and more cogent reason for being grateful to these two unknown correspondents. My novel, while it made an impression, did not lead either of them to identify the characters in its pages as friends or relatives. I found myself in the happy position of not having to inform either of them that my characters, like the incidents which surround them, are figments of my imagination. I did not have to add that I have never been able to take a character from real life and graft him into a piece of fiction and that I have invariably found it inartistic and unsuccessful to resort to actual incident. Although I have learned to my surprise that most non-writers seem to take it for granted that this is the method a novelist employs, I do not believe that a competent novelist ever uses it and, if he does, the result is so dull as not to merit serious attention.

It amazes me that most readers are not only not aware of this, but that they frankly do not believe it. When it comes to the book which I have written, their answer, in general terms, is that any author must necessarily deny writing a *roman à clef*, but that everybody knows that the Brill family in "Wickford Point" are indubitably so-and-so or so-and-so. In fact, every reader seems to know a great deal better than I exactly who everyone in my book is. What interests me particularly as I observe these efforts at identification is that different groups of readers hit upon entirely different persons, very widely separated mentally and geographically, and among them individuals of whom I have never heard. Moreover it does not shake their conviction when I say that their friends have never crossed my path. The characters give an impression of actuality. Therefore they must be real. How else can they be made except from a definite model?

This misapprehension is obviously caused by the intellectual material which any novelist must see. If you or I are going to make the effort of commenting on life through fiction, we are obliged to draw on our own observation and experience in life. It is impossible not to do so, but the things we have learned and the things we have seen must first pass through the mind in a creative process during which this raw material becomes as unrecognizable as light rays that have passed through a rather complicated series of color filters and lenses. The light which started as something clear and obvious has lost several spectral colors. It finishes bent and twisted and perhaps reversed.

The impressions which came to Thackeray through sight, touch, and hearing were materially altered after they had passed through his creative mind. I do not believe that Thackeray ever saw a living Becky Sharp or that Fielding ever saw a living Squire Weston or that Galsworthy ever conversed with a Soames Forsyte in the flesh. I do not presume to put myself in such august company, but I do believe that our mental processes are the same in the creation of fictional character and that this process is common to all writers. It is impossible to tell with any accuracy how characters are evolved, but there are a few starting points in the evolution. A novel, it seems to me, must be built around a theme; and this theme takes some sort of shape, usually inaccurate and unsatisfactory, through an arbitrary plot structure composed of incident; and into this structure must be fitted character. From this point the creative process becomes vague and uncertain.

I give you my experiences in the writing of "Wickford Point" for what they are worth and only because they are familiar to me personally. In my first thoughts about that novel, as far as I can remember them, I worked upon the idea of a story of a family. I wanted a family that excused its mistakes in the present by enlarging upon certain illustrious events of its past. As I considered this idea it seemed to me to illustrate an interesting phase of our time. I could think of a great many people in New England and in the South and West who are affected by this sort of family complex. I could recall a surprisingly large number of families each one of which possessed a feature or two of the general idea which I wished to convey. I could, however, think of no one family that possessed all of the characteristics which I desired for the family in my story. It became necessary, before I was to begin, to select traits from people here and there, from many whom I scarcely knew and from many whom I had only heard mentioned in casual conversation. These traits were magnified or minimized by the process of imagination until the unworldly and disproportionate forms of fiction began to take shape. When my characters were distinct enough to be set down on paper, they were not people I had ever known. In the course of time they became as familiar as old acquaintances, but if I were to see some of them on the street today I would be very much surprised. I would not only be surprised but I would be astonished at how crude they were, how staccato and misshapen and how odd they looked against the background of the living.

As I consider the experience of creating my people in "Wickford Point" I can recall a few specific points in the evolution of one of them. This one is John Brill, the ancestor of the family, whose musty literary memory the Brills frequently used as a defense mechanism. When I sought to bring Mr. Brill out of the air and to give him some sort of recognizable shape, I recalled quite accidentally a remark made to me long ago.

"At any rate," someone had told me,

April Admonition

BY SARA VAN ALSTYNE ALLEN

COMPLETE the season
With a sprightly word
Fashioned to fit
The garrulous bird.

Chant the rising grass,
And hymn recurring love.
Use to round the meager rhyme
The bland, inevitable dove.

Salute the fragile spring
With carefully chosen phrase.
Use adjectives pastel
To welcome April days.

Avoid the over-lush,
Words succulent and mellow.
Carve couplets out of jade
And rose and white and yellow.

Sing your lyric song of spring.
Recount with decorous phrase
How man and beast must go
Their procreative ways.

While spring repeats once more
Her story never done . . .
The jaded miracle,
The parable of sun!

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"you are not old enough to have been kissed by John Greenleaf Whittier."

This called up childhood memories of osculatory old gentlemen, and I pieced them together with a few imaginary, sententious phrases. A writer, as Tolstoy has said, must be able to see a street fight and to turn it into a battle. Out of this hazy material I made, for better or for worse, the character of John Brill. I have been thunderstruck since then to have different readers tell me that he is a faithful representation of John Greenleaf Whittier, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Edward Everett Hale, and Bronson Alcott, because I know hardly anything of the habits or appearance of these gentlemen.

It was also necessary for the purpose of my plot to create a professor of literature. I suppose I have encountered in my time a hundred different persons, fond of books, who have written but who have scarcely lost their amateur standing. Dr. Allen Southby is a composite of all of them; and though he is only a character to me, he has been identified as a famous critic, as each of four different Harvard professors, and as three from Yale. I am acquainted with several of them and any one of them would have been awkward, wooden, and inartistic had I put him in my story.

You may think you know people in a novel, but the truth is you don't. Even your most delightful and flamboyant friends would be indifferent actors in the theater of white paper. If they were to be introduced there, even for a page, they would be tossed into the wastebasket by a competent author. Actually fictional characters, although they seem like living persons, must always be types in some measure familiar to every reader. Not one of your friends or mine could stand the strain or the unnatural contortions which must be undergone by a fictional creation who is worthy of his salt. These poor shadows who are pressed into pages are obliged by the demands of plot and space to face quite a different existence from that of human beings in the everyday world. These harassed type-distorted people worry and love in a non-dimensional plane where they meet a series of situations which must of necessity be grotesque and overdrawn in order to convey an illusion of reality. Even the characters of the most tranquil novel are caught in an accelerated stream of dialogue and action and live their span at many times the normal tempo. The only way to make them seem like living people is to give them the positive and divergent traits drawn from whole platoons of human beings. Their creator's success is directly in proportion to the skill he displays in making a diverse selection of the mannerisms and speech from the shadowy army of impressions that marches through his mind.

I can only say, in conclusion, that I do not know the Brills of "Wickford Point." I know a great many people who possess a few of their peculiarities but that is all.

Successful Liar

THE WOMAN IN THE HALL. By G. B. Stern. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1939. $2.50.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

IT was a tangled web that Lorna Blake wove when first she practised to deceive, but since the wages of her sin was success she slid without a bump into a career of humbug and cajolery. A quiet, demure, rather dowdy little widow, utterly devoted to her two charming small girls, why should the kind-hearted victims of her schemes suppose her to be a cheat, and her deprecating self-respect merely a weapon to force the money from their pockets? Lorna Blake was an artist at dishonesty; she knew just how to vary her plea for help to fit the person she was preparing to rob, she knew how to use her little daughters to aid her in her begging, she knew when to retire to the enjoyment of her ill-gotten gains, and how to avoid the consequences of her few missteps. What she did not foresee and could not prevent was the effects of her career upon her children, the conditioning of their lives by their early experiences, and the long train of events that grew out of her fertile and skillful fabrications.

To outline the incidents of G. B. Stern's diverting tale would be to deprive it of half its effectiveness, for though its device is repeated over and over again it is presented each time with variations, and throughout the novel there runs a consistent inconsistency in the reactions of the characters. "The Woman in the Hall" is excellent entertainment. It is a sprightly tale, delusively light, perhaps, for its gay raillery of the adventuress type of woman, and its abandonment to high spirits have a sharp edge in the ironic implications of the action. The story itself has many implausibilities—in fact many of its situations are cut from the stuff of standard romantic fiction—but there is a dexterity in the involvements of the plot, an ingenuity and cleverness in the psychological pattern of the tale, that delight and surprise. It is seldom one finds a novel of its kind which accelerates so fast as it progresses or which extricates itself from the train of its circumstances with so much cleverness.

Fallen Angels

FRAY MARIO. By Helen Douglas Irvine. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1939. $2.

Reviewed by LOUIS J. HALLE, JR.

OUT of the material in this novelette of eighteenth century Peru another writer might have chosen to construct a swashbuckling romance on the grand scale with operatic overtones. Miss Irvine has made of it instead a minor but impeccable work of art, notable for its simplicity. Extracts from supposed letters, journals, and reports of the time, arranged in coherent order, trace the story of two outcasts from virtuous society, fallen angels both, but with a common afflatus that transcends the cheap virtue of their traducers. Many readers will recall the character of "La Perricholi," a notorious actress and courtesan of colonial Lima, from Thornton Wilder's "The Bridge of San Luis Rey." Probably none will be able to claim prior acquaintance with Mario Otaegui, a figure reminiscent of Browning's Fra Lippo Lippi, who evidently is on the roll of minor poets known only to scholars specializing in the period.

Woodcut by Clare Leighton for "Fray Mario"

Without benefit of omniscience, the "documentary" information from which this story is pieced together can give only an indirectly lighted picture of the protagonists. It is in the imagination of the reader that they become vivid, and herein lies the author's art. Fray Mario, the disreputable son of impoverished Spanish nobility, and Micaela Villegas, the waif of the streets of Lima who became a prima donna overnight, meet face to face only once in the entire course of their turbulent careers, and then for no more than a fleeting moment. Theirs is a convincing love story, not because they are ever lovers, but merely because the reader comes to believe that they would inevitably have been, under better circumstances. But circumstances are all opposed to them, and this, too, is inevitable.

A simple and moving love story told with great restraint, "Fray Mario" promises to remain with the reader long after more flamboyant tales are forgotten.

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The Season's Theater

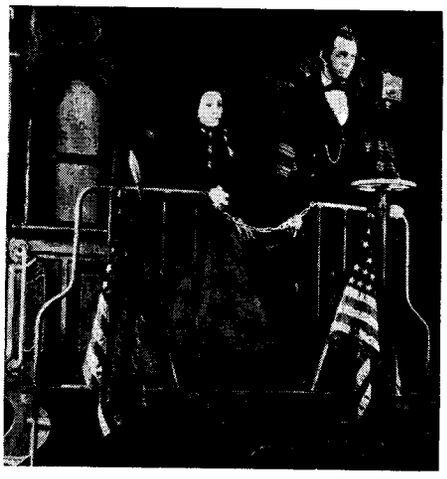
BY JOHN ANDERSON

THOUGH the theater is not exactly innocent of profit motives, it would be unduly cynical to suggest that the closing season has found which side of the box office Democracy is buttered on. Doubtless it has merely made the solvent discovery that now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. With new people discovering America every day it is nice to know it is so popular, and simply as a check-rein on undue enthusiasm I would point out that last season the theater, with equal abandon, discovered God.

Two general points may be made about the season: one is this patriotic propaganda, and the other, that in most plays the acting has far outshone the writing. With a scarcity of first-rate dramatists, there's nothing like grease paint in an emergency. Thus these printed plays do not suggest to the reader, as nearly as printed plays sometimes do, the particular merits of the season.

Without the dilation of performance, without the brass bands, stage crowds, and pictorial detail "The American Way," for instance, seems no more than a blueprint for a rally. Being superb technicians Kaufman and Hart have made their hokum theatrical hokum. They know it gets results on the stage where their show belongs, and where it is more pageantry than drama. Printed, the dialogue retains its fresco scale, and the book seems to scream in the library. In the theater it's the eagle screaming, which makes the difference. The publishers should note that an important speech in the "run on the bank" scene has been omitted from the text.

Though it loses enormously in its separation from Raymond Massey's dedicated performance, Mr. Sherwood's "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" has one great advantage over the acted version, and that is a collection of workshop notes appended to the text. They reveal the care with which the author has used his source material,



The Lincolns leaving for the inauguration, from "Abe Lincoln in Illinois"

and they make very fascinating reading. It still seems to me that the merit of the play as drama has been confused with its undeniable value as preachment in a troublous time.

Mr. Rice's "American Landscape" springs from the same passionate adherence to the American way, but its miscellaneous and undefined use of ghosts (such assorted ghosts as Mrs. Stowe and Moll Flanders) made it disconcerting in the theater, where, oddly enough, all actors are flesh and blood. Reading it is more satisfactory, because the reading mind makes a reservation on the ghost dialogue which the eye and ear do not allow in the theater, and so, actually, type preserves Mr. Rice's scheme in a way impossible on the platform. That, of course, was his mistake as a dramatist and it is a curious mistake for a craftsman of Mr. Rice's perception.

Two plays bring these generalities of human freedom and individual right into sharper focus on smaller canvases, but with the same unmistakable urgence, with the same awareness of surrounding challenge. Irwin Shaw does it in "The Gentle People" with a fable, uneven but sometimes delightful and occasionally muddled, about two elderly cronies whose sole pleasure lies in fishing off a motor boat at Coney Island. It is a parable for dictators, and it makes its eloquent points, one of them being, I suppose, that the meek shall inherit the earth even if they have to do it with a stick, but the play's power is bound up closely with the Group Theatre production, which propped up Mr. Shaw's wobbly typewriter.

Going back in a more humorous vein to just such an Irish parish as he used in "Shadow and Substance," Paul Vincent Carroll has written, in "The White Steed," a close parallel to Mr. Shaw's defense of human right. Mr. Carroll's villainous dictator is a snoopy priest bent upon ramming his blue-nose regulations down the conscience of a free and easy community; but he is checked by the affable, wise, humane, and deeply religious understanding of an old canon who hopes "that God's no theologian or we'll all get our backsides scorched." It is an eloquent, richly amusing, and penetrating defense of faith against dogma and it makes the fervent announcement that we must live and let live, a platitude which in a world crucially imperfect at the moment, takes on the aspect of news.

The beautiful and incorrigible Clare Boothe announces in the preface to "Kiss the Boys Good-Bye" that the play was intended as a political allegory about fascism in America, a fact which seems to have escaped everyone connected with the production, including the producer. Anyway it's a good story and Miss Boothe

Vandamm

Lee Baker and Tallulah Bankhead in "The Little Foxes"

sticks to it by pointing out that her unreconstructed Confederate Cindy Lou represents the first fascist impulse in this country—the Old South. She takes the movie moguls and the Westport intelligentsia as Hitler took Prague, but my suspicion is that if it's an allegory, the play's tail is bigger than the kite. My reading of the play, which has its deft lines and amusing scenes, confirms the impression of its opening night, to wit: that if it proves anything it is that the human race should be condemned and dismantled as unsafe for occupancy.

As if to point out the dangers of rugged individualism implicit in democratic practice, three plays take up the problems of anti-social behavior. Though a perfect type, Oscar Wilde has always been more clinical than dramatic, but Leslie and Sewell Stokes have managed, with the help of Wilde's own collection of epigrams, Frank Harris's impeached memoirs, and the benediction of Lord Alfred Douglas, to run up a play that is unflinching, honest, and tactful. It is, of course, verbally amusing, and finally tragic; and it is obvious, in reading it, that much of its theater fascination stems from the extraordinary performance of Robert Morley in the title part.

Mamba's daughter, Hagar, is pretty near the opposite pole in mentality and motive and her transgression of the law is on solid theatrical basis, for this dumb, giant Negress murders to avenge her daughter's honor. In the printed version the authors have gone back to what I am told was the original plan discarded by the producer, so that here we have a prologue and an epilogue embracing the main action parenthetically. It still doesn't save the play from the clutter and sprawling uncertainty it reveals on the stage, where it is illuminated by Ethel Waters in a performance that makes Hagar's tragedy somberly magnificent.

Miss Hellman examines this theme of rugged individualism in terms of bitterness and anger. "The Little Foxes" is a pitiless study of predatory people. They are non-aristocrats of the South, time 1900, who have plundered everyone

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around them by their inhuman business practices. They, and others like them all over the world, are the little foxes Miss Hellman indicts in Solomon's words. For they "spoil the vines," and "our vines have tender grapes." If Miss Hellman's play seems slightly over-plotted, and occasionally melodramatic, it has the advantages of sharp observation, and incisive character drawing. The exposition of the plot is superbly managed, and the action stems directly from the characters as they reveal themselves to make an absorbing drama.

It is a cantankerous and unlikely world, so at a moment when most other authors are considering weighty affairs of state, Clifford Odets, one of our leading insurrectoes, blandly writes a love story. It is called "Rocket to the Moon" and after a very brilliant first act it lapses into some pretty freshman stuff. It has, of course, the unmistakable distinction of Odets's dialogue; it has some carefully observed characters, but it hasn't anything very much to say. Readers may wonder why a character listed in the cast as "a Salesman" never appears in the printed play. Mr. Odets cut out the scene, which I thought one of the best.

"The Sea Gull" in Stark Young's acting version emphasizes and explains the impression of the Lunt-Fontanne playing—that here is at last, after seven translations, Chekhov in English with an exact rendering of his method. It is a method that relies heavily on verbal usage, and this quality was, of course, lost by translators who had no interest in it. Quite probably they were not even aware what they were losing, though actually they were losing Chekhov. The repetition of phrases, the delicacy of sentence structure, the precision of definition—all these things go to create the effect that is essential to Chekhov's whole intent, and that cannot be achieved without them. Not only has Mr. Young been able to do this for "The Sea Gull," but he has been able to say how and why in a foreword which should be a model for all translators. His account of searching out the Chekhovian method from the original, through a maze of mistranslations, has the excitement of a detective story, and with the notes on acting it lends special value to a now unclouded classic.

THE AMERICAN WAY. By George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart. New York: Random House. 1939. $2.
ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS. By Robert E. Sherwood. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1939. $2.
AMERICAN LANDSCAPE. By Elmer Rice. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1939. $2.
THE GENTLE PEOPLE. By Irwin Shaw. New York: Random House. 1939. $2.
THE WHITE STEED and THE COGGERERS. By Paul Vincent Carroll. The same.
KISS THE BOYS GOOD-BYE. By Clare Boothe. The same.
OSCAR WILDE. By Leslie and Sewell Stokes. The same.
MAMBA'S DAUGHTERS. By Dorothy and DuBose Heyward. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. $2.
THE LITTLE FOXES. By Lillian Hellman. New York: Random House. 1939. $2.
ROCKET TO THE MOON. By Clifford Odets. The same.
THE SEA GULL. by Anton Chekhov. Translated by Stark Young. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1939. $2.50.

Humor without Farce

NO STONE UNTURNED. By Patrick Carleton. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1939. $2.50.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

MR. PATRICK CARLETON is a young Englishman who has to his credit a number of novels, each of which has had upon it the unmistakable stamp of a skillful and powerful writer, and which have hitherto followed a pattern of regularly increasing seriousness, up to the last one, the much praised historical novel "Under the Hog." He has now turned abruptly about, to write a light, almost a farcical story; it is written with his usual easy mastery, and yet there are in it curious hints that he is not quite at home in the world of comedy. Superficially, this is an agreeable entertainment, weaving together a number of frothy stories about a group of people brought together at a Derbyshire spa. There is an American just out of college, who finds the English abominably standoffish and ends by marrying one; a schoolboy boxer, who makes a clandestine appearance in the local prize-ring, and his desperate and ingenious struggles to keep the secret from his family; his gorgon grandmother, who turns out to have a heart of gold; a Jewish diamond merchant and a woman novelist, no longer young, who (besides providing some excellent fun about publishers) marry each other; and, serving as climax to this frothy story, there is the discovery that a sex murderer is at large, and is one of the guests.

All this adds up to a book which is humorous without being farcical, in the deft English way. But the reader has the recurrent feeling that there are more serious pieces which do not fit into the texture of the book. Perhaps the clue is provided by the novelist of the story, who says that her own novels come of trying to express herself about two unrelated themes. If one tries to apply that to this, one may guess that one of the themes is alienness: so far as there is a hero it is the American who finds England so strange; and in proposing to the authoress the jeweler says in effect that he and she, the Jew and the artist, are only the extremes of the loneliness of every human being. The other recurrent theme seems to be the problem of cruelty. That is implicit in the sex murderer, who is out of key with the surface of the book; it appears constantly in the thoughts of at least two of the characters, the jeweler, unable to forget Nazi persecution, and the woman writer, preoccupied with prison conditions. (It is noteworthy that all the other characters are closely interrelated, but these two stand somewhat apart, like a chorus.)

Patrick Carleton

But whatever may have been the experience of Mr. Carleton's novelist, his own novel does not assimilate these themes; they remain outside the structure of the entertainment he offers. This criticism is perhaps carping, and is certainly, though unavoidably, disproportionate; the occasional irrelevant paragraphs need not interfere with one's enjoyment of a thoroughly enjoyable book. But it seems worth making, because a preoccupation with cruelty runs through so much of Mr. Carleton's other work; one feels that it is a problem which has been set him to solve, and until he comes to a conclusion which satisfies him, his books, brilliant though they are, will continue to seem less brilliant than one feels him capable of producing.

Visitors to Berlin

SWASTIKA. By Oscar Schisgall. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1939. $2.

THE characters in Mr. Schisgall's story are flatly done, as though they were "type-cast" for their superficial rightness for the parts. But this is, in a large measure, compensated for by the full and vigorous development of the background against which they are placed. Carol and Eric Traub are making a short visit to Germany, to help liquidate the business of Traub's father. Eric is German-born; he has spent about ten years in the United States and married an American girl. With their first experience of Berlin there begins a drama that is as powerful as contemporaneous excitement can make it: it is the spectacle of today's most dynamic philosophy, fascism, reaching out to engulf two more people. The effect is varied, disruptive. Carol, the girl accustomed to the roomy and liberal processes of democracy, is at first disturbed by the regimentation of the Nazis, then appalled by their brutal excesses. Yet these very things look different to Eric. A new racial pride takes hold of him, he finds justice and justification in everything he sees, and leaps at last, in a series of crescendoed steps, into the ranks of the new Germany. In developing this theme Mr. Schisgall has utilized, with a great deal of skill and imagination, all of the feverish manifestations of Nazi energy. We see the parades, hear the speeches, catch a glimpse of Hitler—and we catch glimpses too of the harrying of the Jews, the silencing of the doubters, the machinations before Munich. If the characters of Eric and Carol had been given enough of human, individual fullness, this might have been a novel of magnitude. As it is, "Swastika" is distinguished by its realistic treatment of Berlin's tense existence.

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Fair Cities

CHAMPAGNE DAYS OF SAN FRANCISCO. By Evelyn Wells. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. $3.

Reviewed by JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON

HIS youthful scrutiny of San Francisco in the nineties led Frank Norris to the conclusion that the jigsaw and antimacassar characteristics of its decor were reflected in the citizens' minds. "The city where nobody thinks," he called it scornfully, and sat down and wrote a powerful novel about Polk Street.

Nevertheless San Franciscans of that period had a good time whether they thought very much about it or not. In this book, Evelyn Wells, long a newspaper woman in San Francisco and possessed of a special tenderness for what she calls the "champagne days," does her best to evoke their spirit. As a matter of fact, it is a very good best indeed. Readers of fifty or more will turn the pages with a steady twitching of the fond-memory nerve. Younger ones will enjoy the book in proportion to their recollections of what their parents told them. Neither group will need to know San Francisco, though one familiar with the city will enjoy their reading that much more.

Miss Wells has dug up a thousand dear details peculiar to her San Francisco, but she has also rebuilt a whole era. You need not be a San Franciscan, for instance, to relish her recreation of the time when Gelett Burgess and his brilliant colleagues edited *The Lark*, had fun with "The Purple Cow," and spent the evening over spaghetti and red ink at Sanguinetti's. Every city had its Sanguinetti's then. And people went about spouting "I'd rather see than be one!" from Tacoma to Tallahassee. Even a New Yorker or Philadelphian, say, will be on familiar enough ground with such old San Francisco favorites as David Warfield, David Belasco, Blanche Bates, Laura Hope Crews, Maxine Elliott, and Holbrook Blinn. And what village anywhere in America could fail to recognize the author's reference to "Ed" Bowes (even though he was no Major then), whose new gadget, an "automobile," stood him a repair bill of $150 a month?

It isn't possible to quote further here. "Champagne Days in San Francisco," however, is full of this kind of thing, packed with the atmosphere, the color—the bubble—of the age about which it is written. To be sure, it is a San Franciscan's book above all; Miss Wells has written about that city and chiefly for its people. But it is true, too, that the ghost she conjures up is as much the ghost of a time as of a place.

Joseph H. Jackson is literary editor of the San Francisco Chronicle.

OFFICIAL GUIDE BOOK; NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR. New York: Exposition Publications. 1939. 25c.

ALMANAC FOR NEW YORKERS. 1939. *Modern Age Books.* 50c.

A KEY TO NEW YORK. By Rosalie Slocum and Ann Todd. New York: Modern Age Books. Paper, 95c. *Harper & Bros.* 1939. *Cloth.* $2.

NEW YORK PANORAMA. American Guide Series. New York: Random House. 1939. $2.50.

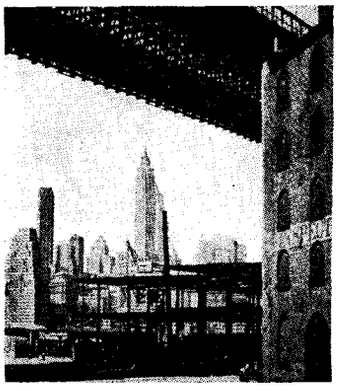
CHANGING NEW YORK. By Berenice Abbott & Elizabeth McCausland. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1939. $3.

DINING OUT IN NEW YORK. By G. Selmer Fougner. New York: H. C. Kinsey & Co. 1939. $1.

HOW DO YOU LIKE NEW YORK? By Eva T. McAdoo. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1939. $2.

Reviewed by FLETCHER PRATT

IT may be taken as typical of the often perplexing but always fascinating phenomenon called New York, that of seven volumes, each intended to be an essential handbook to the city and/or its fair, no one resembles any other. Doubtless this is partly owing to the fact that six of the publishers tried to produce something beyond the cut-and-dried Baedeker they imagined every other publisher would turn out, and all six succeeded. Yet the complexity of the city itself must in the long run be responsible when 1,770 pages can be written about it without anyone repeating himself or anyone else. This is true even in fields where overlapping would seem unavoidable. Miss McAdoo's theoretical couple doing a grand tour of the town in seven days (a labor comparable to that reported in Genesis I) went to a different restaurant for each of the fourteen meals they had without once reaching any of the places on Mr. Fougner's selected list; and the "Key to New York" furnishes another list of restaurants without repeating either of the others.



From "Changing New York."

Of course, the answer in this specific instance is that Mr. Fougner's guide is for eaters who can contemplate with positive pleasure the expenditure of two dollars for a Poulet Marengo with another $2.50 for a bottle of Château Pontet Canet '29 to go with it and an evening to be spent in consuming both. On a rather snooty plane the Fougner book is an efficient gastronomic guide, but neglects some of the less obvious delicacies.

Miss McAdoo's public, on the other hand, is composed of country cousins with hearts of oak and muscles of iron, who are expected to spend an entire day charging through the halls of the Metropolitan, with an evening at the theater and a night at the Rainbow Room to follow. She intends them to do most of their traveling by subway or shanks' mare, and does not think they will mind if the information about where to go is surrounded by one of the world's most magnificent collections of travelogue clichés. Probably she is right.

"Changing New York" shifts the empasis from mouth and muscles to eyes—a photographic guidebook or record of scenes, many of which are already vanished. The human figure is at a premium in this book, and it lacks both the personal interest and the evocations of mood that made Morand's "Paris la Nuit" such a classic. The lighting is hard, cold, definite, the masses of monumental solidity; and for this reason there is all the more interest in Elizabeth McCausland's captions, insisting on the essential impermanence of these marmoreal structures.

"New York Panorama" also emphasizes fluidity, not only in space from street to street, but in time from day to day, in the city which it calls "Cosmopolis," and which by common consent of all the guidebooks is truly universal, offering whatever enrichment flesh or spirit may desire. In one sense this is the most valuable of the guides; it is the most generalized, describing the city's interests and their centers, and leaving the visitor free for the pleasure of discovering the specific example. But it is disfigured by parlor-pink radicalism.

"A Key to New York" furnishes the perfect antithesis to a work which is mostly opinion and all background. In form it is a series of annotated lists of things to do and see, with accent on those that do not cost much, and it is the only work of the seven that gives special attention to the problem of what to do with the children. Even natives will find it useful, more useful than the "Almanac for New Yorkers," which is an amusing trifle from the Federal Writers' Project, a kind of "New Yorker Annual" with text instead of Arno drawings.

This leaves the one book organized on Baedeker lines, the "Official Guide to the World's Fair." It will probably outsell all the others, and it will deserve to; for not only is it the cheapest of the lot, but also the simplest and most forthright, telling what there is to see at the fair and how to get to it, without adjectives.

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Passivity Program

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

(Author's Note: This is not writing but conversation. It is condensed from a stenographic transcript taken down as uttered, and was the concluding talk of a series given in March and April at Adelphi College, Garden City, Long Island. I employ the term Passivity with some mischief as "Activity Programs" have become a fetich among progressive educators.)

AT THIS season along the railings of the Old Granary burying ground on Tremont Street in Boston the peddlers come out to sell little packages of catnip. I have always supposed it is because the cats of New England, and particularly the cerebral cats of Boston, in that cold dry climate, fondled by the innumerable spinsters of Back Bay, have been exhausted by the number of sparks that have issued from their fur during the winter months. They have to be built up again with fresh catnip. It must be the same with an audience that has endured an entire decimal system of ten lectures. It has been a great adventure for me; I have never spoken so many times in one place. Usually, for me, every speech is a valedictory.

I promised to give a résumé or portable summary of our soliloquies. So I try to remind you of some of the points. As I look over the stenographic transcript they give me a certain shock of surprise. I feel like Don Marquis's immortal roach who was climbing Mount Everest and met an avalanche coming down. He said, "we agreed to compromise and I'm starting all over again at the bottom." It's rather like Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Daladier after Munich.

We began with unusual candor by warning the group against anything I might say. I know of no other speaker, public or private, who begins by warning his audience against himself. I said I would try to say what was true for me; but not necessarily true for you; particularly for the younger members. I pointed out with bashful honesty that I had passed my actuarial expectancy of life, 48.23 years, which the Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company had assured me at my own cost. Statistically I am as good as dead; living on borrowed time, on velvet, enjoying a cigar on the house. All my errors, I said hopefully, had been made; I was living on a dividend. Happily that is not so of you all. Many of you still have your errors to enjoy, and to discover your own way of committing them. So I said, sprinkle plenty of question marks on whatever I say. But I think with amazement on the truth of one remark. We said that the lights were changing; whether from red to green or from green to red no one could know. Consider, in one month and two days that we have been soliloquizing here, how the lights have changed. A great many dreadful front-page words are being altered, or eaten (an unpalatable diet); consider the change in Mr. Chamberlain, and in opinion about Mr. Chamberlain. I urge you again, since the lights are changing and every kind of influence is being brought to bear, not to be intoxicated by crowd poison or trampled by thundering herds, whether editorial, political, or racial. These talks, however imperfect or deplorable, have been deliberately directed to the individual corpuscle and the personal sensibility. If there is one writing of which I am proud it is a little poem that occurred to me one day going up in an elevator in an old building on Nassau Street. It was simply the declension of the Latin first person singular:—

This is all we ever say:
Ego, mei, mihi, me.

Literature is only a small fraction of a complete life. Even in the greatest creators, what they got down on paper was only a tithe, a minuscule portion of the whole. I think of a charming poet who died of drink and insomnia (so the books say) at exactly my present age. That's why I feel sympathetic for him and try to keep away from insomnia. His name was James Thomson. There are two of them; to make it more confusing still, they both died at the age of 48; I hope the Provident Mutual is cautious about anyone with that name. The other one wrote *The Seasons*. This James Thomson wrote a very extraordinary grim poem *The City of Dreadful Night*, but also some charming lighter verse in which he said:—

Singing is sweet but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.
Had his fingers been able to toy with her hair
Would they then have written the verses fair?
Were the wine really slipping down his throat
Would his song of the wine advance a note? . . .
Statues and pictures and verse may be grand
But they are not the Life for which they stand

Those last two lines are really a capsule of our first soliloquy. It's a consoling notion. In young days of elasticity many of us may have artistic dreams which the course of life does not allow us to fulfill. Out of ten thousand people who hope to become professional poets perhaps only one will ever publish a book of verse. I have to remind you that publishing a book of verse does not solve all problems, even for the publisher. A person who has never published anything but truly enjoys verses may live a happier and more useful life than a disappointed poet who grinds himself into a public hack.

I quoted a notable phrase from Logan Pearsall Smith about "imaginative dominion over experience," and I tried to suggest that there are people who, no matter how exciting their experiences, never rise above or aside those experiences to get an imaginative or synthesizing purview of them. A person who lives all his life in a back yard and has spiritual dominion over that back yard may be a greater artist than a radio broadcaster who hustles all over the world. There are some big noises on the air that might broadcast 365 nights a year and still wouldn't know as much about what's really happening as Emily Dickinson learned in her garden at Amherst.

I tried to emphasize also that similar conditions anywhere and at any time are likely to produce similar results. The likeness of spirit between Don Marquis and Mark Twain, for instance, was due not only to a temperamental affinity but also to their upbringing in similar middle-western surroundings and the same sort of social ideas; allowing for the gap of a whole generation. I offered some quotations from Marquis's newspaper work to remind you that the acute observer must learn to distinguish larger significances behind what might seem casual and jocular or even vulgar. I read you that passage Don Marquis wrote about a Talk at the Mermaid Tavern, which I reaffirm as one of the most intuitive comments on Shakespeare ever written. You were surprised that Don Marquis took us back to Shakespeare; but I wanted to suggest the space-time continuum of the arts. Plato may be more modern than Lowell Thomas. You must learn to make intellectual and spiritual subtractions and remember that in the arts Time—in the sense of chronology—means very little. What Montaigne and Leonardo thought is very likely more timely than what we're thinking now.

Somehow—I don't remember how—we reached the interesting notion that art is fooling people so agreeably that we end by fooling ourselves also. I don't mean fooling in any crude sense, but creating illusion. You can see an old ham actor beginning his piece on the momentum of habit, but after he gets going he begins to be happy and really thinks he's Richelieu. Most of us are ham actors in the inscrutable role of Me.

In the fourth phalanx of our series I demurred gallantly to a charming lady from Great Neck who reproached us for being familiar with the great images of literature. I think she misunderstood my alluding to Shakespeare as "Bill." I was then quoting from Don Marquis. But I said that years of affectionate application sometimes earn us the right to be familiar. I quoted the French saying, "On se moque de ce qu'on aime." Observe the French subtlety: you are not mocking what you love; you are mocking yourself

(*Continued on page* 20)

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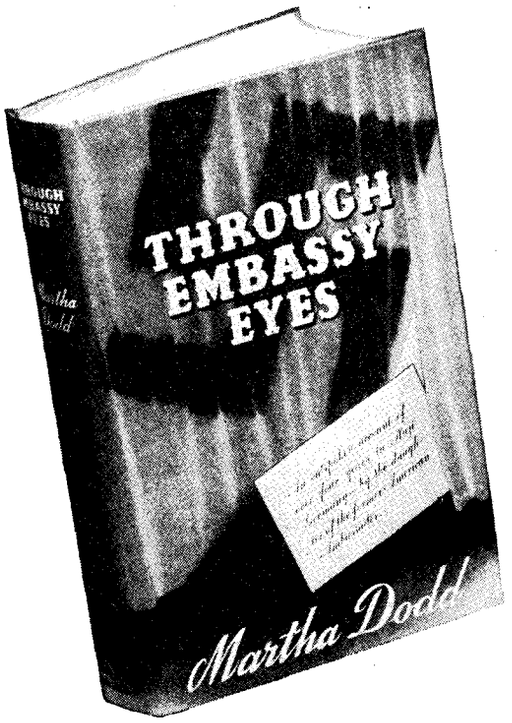

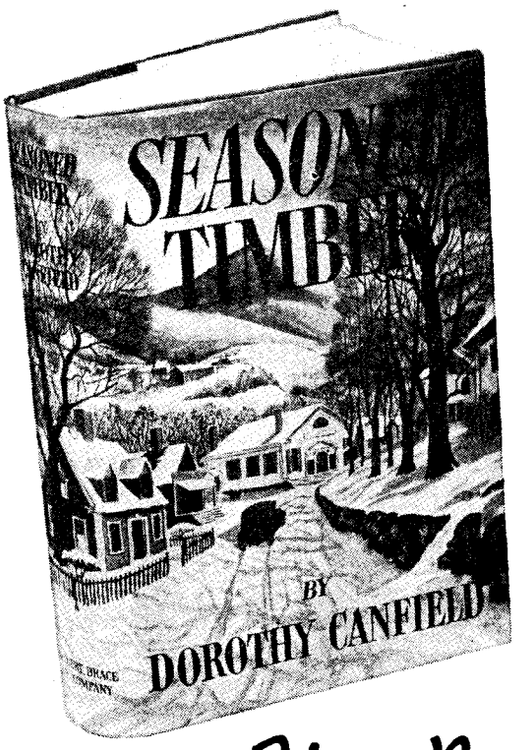

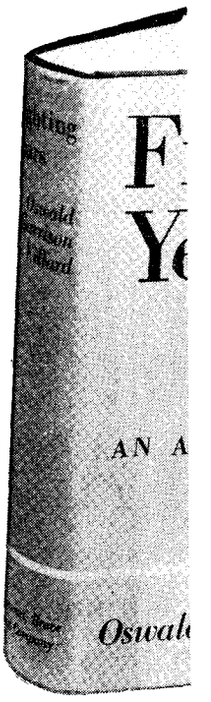

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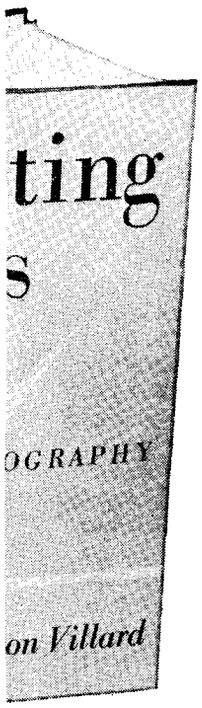

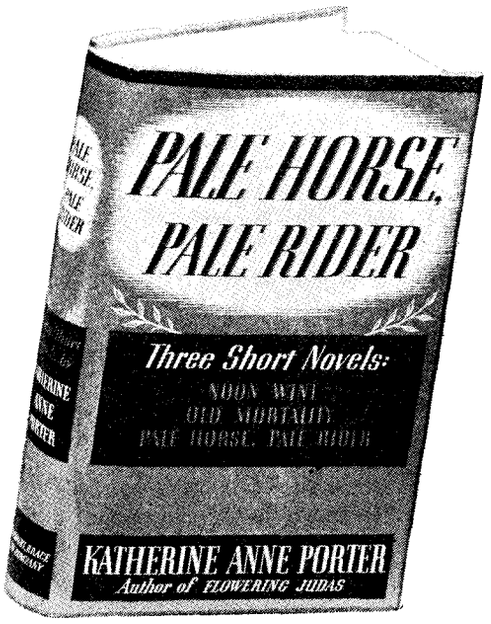

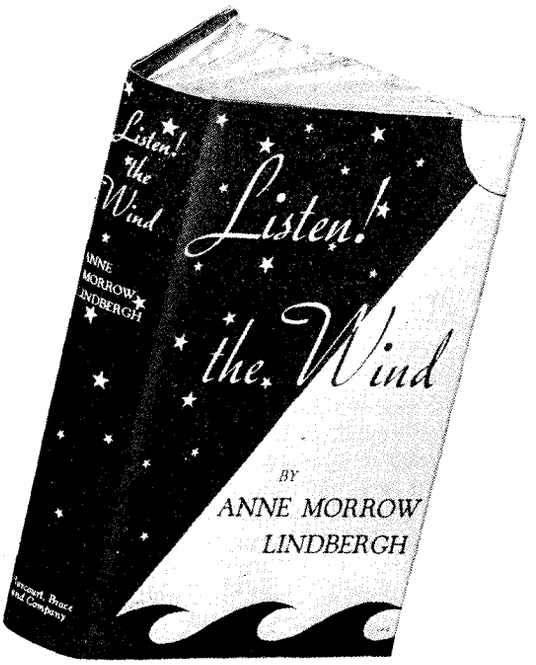

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Passivity Program

(*Continued from page 17*)

of it. In English the reflexive or deponent verbs are deficient in power; one of the many weaknesses of the English language. When I mock myself of anything I include myself in the merriment, and it is to conceal one's deep emotions that one adopts a light tone. It need not be fatally misleading. One of the pleasures in which English poetry is rich is the art of parody. But parody means nothing unless you know what is being parodied. There is no fun in doing a thing wrong unless you know perfectly well how to do it the right way.

The reproach of being too offhand with magnificent legends led us to De Quincey, the great (and divinely verbose) journalist who had been criticized for just that. We quoted some of his disgraceful confidences; and then the huge air-clipper, just barely lifting herself over our North Shore treetops on her way to Bermuda, hinted us back again to Shakespeare, who also made a pretty heavy takeoff on some of his long flights. The point was that some of your staff, about to go vacationing in Bermuda, hadn't realized that *The Tempest* was written about those islands. We mentioned Rudyard Kipling's actual identification in Bermuda of some of the oddities Shakespeare had learned by hearsay, probably in a pub. The reference to both Don Marquis and Kipling as commentators on Shakespeare was to enforce a special thought. Quite a special kind of understanding of great artists is felt by those who have led the same sort of lives; it is not the understanding gained in the library or in the minutiae of textual collation. I do not say that one understanding is better than the other; they are different; and both are necessary.

I tried to show that the great poets are great reporters. We suggested what a difficult time one would have condensing the first forty lines of Chaucer's prologue into a newspaper dispatch that would contain as much information. We suggested Keats's letters as some of the most thrilling and honorable reporting in our tongue; reporting the kind of things that people actually feel. Most newspaper reporters train themselves not to. As yet another kind of noble journalism we mentioned Hazlitt's description of his first meeting Coleridge.

In that soliloquy we even got into Plato's *Symposium*. We were warning ourselves against another emotional drinking-bout, in a national sense. At the beginning of the *Symposium* the guests were doubtful about going to another binge as they had had one the night before. Agathon had won what would now be called the Pulitzer Prize and it had been generously celebrated. So this additional party was a bit reluctant; though in the end great things were said. In the same way, I suggested, let's be a little slow about the militarist spree that is now offered us. Some of the syndicated Cassandras have us almost at war already.

The idiotic episode of goldfish-eating at various colleges came under our notice. But we turned it to account, as a practised soliloquist always can. We spoke of a visit to an aquarium and the extraordinary beauty of the fish. The essence of their beauty and grace is that they are of the same density as the medium they inhabit. In the same way a work of art must approximate the density of the mood in which it desires to circulate; the poet attempts to attain his purpose by adapting language and form to the emotion he wishes to create. I illustrated this by some examples from living writers. Often this is done unconsciously; or the artist even denies it afterward. The most famous poem of our generation begins:—

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain . . .

Then, for ironic effect Mr. Eliot takes us into coffee and small talk in an Austrian beergarden. But how skilful is this opening for arousing the mind's curiosity and alertness; even to the device of attaining momentum and run-on in the participial line-endings; a trick Walt Whitman loved. At once you ask yourself: *why* is April the cruellest month? *Why* is the mixture of memory and desire so poignant? Mr. Eliot has denied that this notorious poem, *The Waste Land*, is an expression of his own disillusionment or of his generation's despair. Perhaps because, like us all, he has had so many subsequent disillusions he has forgotten which one he was thinking about. It reminds us again to be skeptical of what the artist says about his own work. Where it is at its most meaningful he can least account for what he is saying. This may be true even for lecturers.

The moment a thing is said it is no longer the property of the sayer. It belongs to the hearer, or reader, to make of it what his requirement prompts.

I tried, throughout these disorderly talks, to emphasize the importance of discerning in one's own immediate natural surroundings the larger suggestions that may be there. I said that the sentiment or tradition of a college could radiate from, or be built around, one beautiful thing; in the case of my own small college the largest significance to me is in two things many of its alumni scarcely heed at all: an old ruined greenhouse arch (that leads nowhere) and a letter of John Keats in the autograph collection. I fear you thought me jocular when I said that the most significant thing to me at Adelphi College is its great spacious parking lot. It's the only place I know where I'm sure I'm going to have room to park. If I could leave my car here and walk the rest of the way I might even feel bold enough to go to the World's Fair. I said this was symbolic: a college should be a place where there's room to park, room for ideas of all kinds regardless of race or creed or novelty or antiquity; space for maneuver and time for thought.

I once wrote a novel whose whole action revolved about an impending Picnic which never happened at all. Perhaps the now undeliverable tenth soliloquy is only a trick to suggest the hope of being asked again some day. We will end, with artistic completeness, where we began. The two charming children who came to call on me six weeks ago began with the familiar question "Where do you do your work?" I shocked them by replying with unexpected honesty, In the bathtub. That was perfectly true, and my first introduction of what I have called my Passivity Program. The passive frame of mind in which ideas begin. My first conscious adventure in a tub happened in an Atlantic steamer when I was very small. My mother put me in one of those enormous maritime bathtubs (made appropriately by Shanks and Company, the great Scottish marine plumbers) and then was called away by some emergency of a younger brother. I was left alone in this deep tub, the ship gave a roll, I slid down to one end and my head went under water. But I was not frightened, for I noticed at once that under water one could hear the profound interior rhythm of the engines. Every boy who has knocked stones together under water and listened with his head submerged knows how sound travels in water; indeed nowadays they do submarine signaling and depth measurements on that principle. So all my life I have enjoyed putting my head under water in the tub. Well, one winter we moved to an apartment on West End Avenue. I used to take my bath late in the morning, and lie there in soak sinking under the surface by comfortable habit. Then I suddenly discovered that in the flimsy construction of a West End Avenue apartment house, when my head was under water in the tub I could hear every word that was being said in the apartment underneath. This was of great sociological value in a novel I was writing. Many times this habit has given me pleasing experiences. Once in a college in western Pennsylvania it chanced that the guest bathroom was just through the wall from a telephone booth; and submerged in my pre-lecture tub I could hear everything the students were telephoning about, including their morbid apprehensions about the forthcoming lecture. It was so interesting I nearly drowned.

What I laboriously approach is the importance of putting your head beneath the surface in whatever social element we live. Wherever it may be, if you put your head under water, just be passive and listen, you will be astonished and thrilled and entertained.

My suggestion is to look a little sideways at the world. The optician tells

(*Continued on page 23*)

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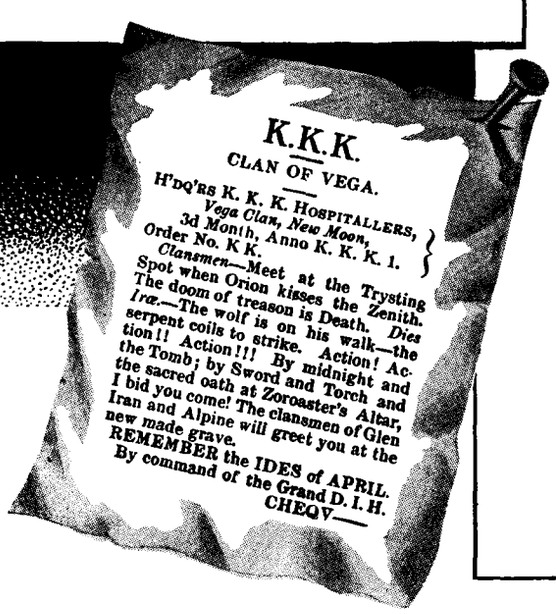
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Humors and Careers

(*Continued from page* 4)

of ease about his verse. It hasn't the motion and grace of his prose. It is his own fault, if he has accustomed us to whole pages of asterisk-separated irrelevances which were both pointed and charming. He was and is an adept at avoiding the big town's parochial sneer. An anecdote about a young matron, a resident of East Orange, does not depend for its point, when he tells it, on the native ridiculousness of young matrons, or the patent absurdity of residing in New Jersey. Instead he will write delightfully about the young lady, but he will leave you hanging on both horns of one of the aimless dilemmas in which this cock-eyed universe abounds. And he will be gentle, humble, and thoughtful about that. Though no man can get justifiably angrier, witness his poem on that ignoble whelp Vittorio Mussolini, the fact is that his most successful moments are due to a high sense of the nobility of the ridiculous tempered with ingenious kindness. But he is a lot more than a pleasant fellow with a flair for amiable enjoyment of the eccentricities of man. His powers are visible on his every page, but a recent performance would be enough to make the point if it were necessary. A fortnight or so ago in *The New Yorker* he printed a thing called "The Door." It's devilish and angelic. It's what the stream-of-consciousness boys and girls would do if they knew how. That awful mental state when a man is aware of himself as a double creature, as an official *I*, watched with objective impartiality by an anonymous and independent intelligence that has no share in passion or ambition, never got more effectively on paper. Yet people will probably go on talking about Mr. White as if he were a little lower than the crooners, and return to some fat-headed novelist who makes serious contributions to the thought of the time, whatever that is.

Mr. Thurber's bizarre bushel and Mr. White's elegant one have to some extent concealed the intensity of their candlepower. We must alter the metaphor for Mr. Nash, whose grotesques and gargoyles draw away the mind from the symmetry of his criticism. With a view to writing this article I ran through several of his volumes. The first thing that strikes one is that his ephemeral flippancies stand up very well even after a lapse of years, often after the episodes or personalities that provoked them have gone down the drain. This seems to me causally connected with the fact that he is frequently inconsiderately correct in his estimate of natura naturans. When he takes a crack at a man or a thing he hits the white by instinct. Some engaging America without chromium fixins speaks in the cock-eyed rhymes and gangling lines that look so innocent of thought—and aren't.

None of our satirists takes pretentiousness for longer rides. Affectation is broken up in his odd alembic into its constituent gases, and the process is always accompanied by a display of unexpected color which his spectroscope enables us to study with novel enjoyment. And that's all right, but we ought to pay some attention to his dichtung as well as his wahrheit. I have yet to hear one of his countless admirers mention the Caroline grace of "To a Lady Passing Time Better Left Unpassed." Sir John Suckling would have been tickled by that mixture of colloquial ease and universal fieriness. Though it be less graceful, the subtlety and pain in a "Song for Ditherers" ought not to go uncelebrated. Nothing sharper or wiser on the individual and generally unreal trouble of mind that fills a large part of our conscious hours occurs to me at the moment. If Mr. Nash had spent half his thirty-seven years at the feet of experts, he probably could still tell them several things they don't know. Characteristically he made the necessary investigations in his own interior, and with his fine gift for valid induction and high-pressure portmanteau condensation summarized his findings with unforgettable, fantastic, and fortunate frivolity. Nevertheless, though his tone seldom loses the gay infectiousness, he can be grimmer than those who try to be. It is no fat boy who wants to make your flesh creep that wrote "Time Marches On." I think his brave cult of the colloquial has hurt him a little in this strange thing. But there is so much dynamite in it that only the sort of pundit whom one murders, unfortunately only in fantasy, could object to the lax line or an epithet for once off key. As the phrase goes, the punch it packs makes up for the points it loses on form.

A wise being, probably wiser than the reader, not to mention the writer, once opined that W. S. Gilbert was an unfortunate man. His reason was that Gilbert didn't write in Ancient Greek. "If he had, where would Aristophanes be?" Doubtless this borders the hyperbolic, but the point is clear enough. There is some absurd prejudice in our minds which makes us believe that what is lightly said is probably trivial, because it didn't give us a headache. The half-conscious assumption has its modest side, implying as it does our secret suspicion that we are incapable of sustaining intellectual excitement. But it is also a bit patronizing in so far as it affects authors to whose antics we pay the involuntary tribute of laughter, in particular these three. They have not, thank God, got "such a thing as a message between them." But they have a magnificent collection of aperçus and inshoots. And we are gunshy about messages, especially when many of them are in code and unlikely to be translated. One turns with relief to the unpretentious but skillful, whose unsystematized observations are clear, fresh, diverting, and loaded for bear.

Leonard Bacon's autobiography, "Semi-Centennial," was recently published.

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Passivity Program

(*Continued from page* 20)

us that the corner of the eye may actually see better than the center; that part of the retina is less fatigued. We used to hear a great deal about the Forgotten Man. There are two reasons for anything being forgotten: one that you rarely see it; the other that you see it all the time and so don't notice it. I make a plea for those things we see all the time and therefore are so likely to disregard in our learning and teaching. I plead with you, keep the eyes of wonder, the arched brows of astonishment. The more familiar a thing is the more joy in discovering its strangeness. Don't be disturbed if you find yourself seeing differently from other people. Let's take the humblest example, an everyday loaf of bread. Nothing rouses such contempt in my heart as modern American factory-made bread, wrapped up in wax-paper and already sliced by machinery. You can't even have the fun of cutting through a good stiff crust with a sharp knife. A miserable, moist, soft, sweetish, spongy indigenous exogamous unnutritious kind of rubbery cellulose. Talk about totalitarianism and dictatorships, when was there ever such a humiliation imposed upon a nation as American artificial bread? They even have to moan about it on the radio to try to sell it. The dreadful thing is there's a whole new generation grown up who hardly ever saw a loaf of real bread and take that terrible pulp for granted. I'm trying to turn your minds back to a genuine crusty loaf of home-made bread. And maybe I mean intellectual bread.

Now the kind of education we get is, of necessity, prefabricated and machine-sliced and neatly wrapped up in wax-paper. It's laid out in courses with numbers, dovetailed and timetabled and labeled so many credits, mass produced and chemically pure and assorted in little extracts in uniform textbooks. Do you get the pleasure of owning your own copy of Keats or Vachel Lindsay or Hazlitt? You do not. You get a few snips in a textbook. I'm not sneering at it. It's better than nothing. But don't be misled. It's only sandwich bread, grocers' bread. It's not the ancient staff of life. Bread ought to be important for women: the very word *lady* means one who knows all about a loaf of bread; it actually means a loafer. All right: look it up.

There was a poet, not far from here, who wrote a poem dealing with the most beautiful symbol we have on Long Island. You may have some of them on this campus: the dogwood tree. Both in the blossom season and in the red-berry season it is emblem of many kinds of loveliness. Even in this cold dreary spring weather it's thrilling to realize that unseen, inside those rough trunks the unknown incalculable indescribable silver of that whiteness is creeping softly upward, ready to burst into one of the most perfect sights of which man has knowledge. The verses are really a dialogue, two voices addressing each other à propos the dogwood tree. Perhaps it was something more than a dogwood tree that the poet had in mind; you can take it as it means most. The last line sums up, more or less, what we have tried to say in our series:—

Dogwood Tree

Whiteness crept up through the woody veins
And spread all sudden on the unknowing air—
That should have cured stupidities and pains?
I could not watch it long. It's rude to stare.

And you made nothing of it, ere it vanished,
That naked beauty of your own dear Day,
Life's whitest body?
I was grateful and astonished,
But what was there to say.
A toss of foaming, like the crystal shatter
Of a bursting wave in magic pause—
And was that all you thought about the matter?
I wanted to tell *you* how beautiful it was.

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Most hermits just sit and brood—but Savel comforts the ladies . . .

HE SAYS: "It so happens, friend, that when I see a woman, or a girl, who is at all beautiful—my soul soars up and seems to blossom out. I feel a kind of gratitude to them: at the sight of one, I recall all those I have ever known and they are numberless."

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N. B. On account of He's A Stranger Here Himself, we can't very well include Ogden Nash's book in a Harper advertisement.

HARPERS

London Book-Talk

BY JOHN HADFIELD

ONE by one the lamps of European culture go out. Here in London, after the gloomies start to any year since 1918, the book world is illumined only by the kicksy-wicksy glare of "Mein Kampf." Hurst & Blackett published on March 21 a complete but unduly polite translation, which differs from both of the American versions. This is the only runaway best-seller. It is one of life's little ironies that every one of the sixty thousand copies sold has put a *pourboire* into the pocket of the man who has caused our present discontents.

Readers at present are preferring tragi-comedy to *revue.* Despite beguiling offers of "All This—and Heaven Too," the public taste is all for the other thing—and the hell of it. Douglas Reed's "Disgrace Abounding," Wells's "The Holy Terror," Sir Philip Gibbs's "This Nettle Danger," Gedye's "Fallen Bastions"—these symptomatically depressing titles are the books that are selling. The publisher of "Fallen Bastions" (which is called "Betrayal in Central Europe" in the United States) took the drastic course of halving the price of the book ten days after publication, when Hitler occupied Bohemia. His enterprise has been rewarded by large sales.

Meanwhile two great and lasting literary momuments have been completed. More than forty years after the Secretary to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press first discussed the project with Lord Acton, the "Cambridge Histories" have been completed. April 20 saw the issue of the twelfth volume of the "Cambridge Ancient History." The modern section was finished in 1910, the medieval in 1936. Recently, too, J. E. Mansion completed Harrap's French and English Dictionary, a task on which he has been engaged since 1919.

It is not long since T. S. Eliot ceased publication of his quarterly, *The Criterion.* Now, with its April issue, *The London Mercury* comes to an end. Founded in 1919 by J. C. Squire, it was the chief organ of the Georgian poets and of that robust and bucolic group of writers known as "the Squirearchy." It was a vigorous defender of cultural amenities as diverse as fine printing and Stonehenge. In 1934 Sir John Squire gave way to R. A. Scott-James as editor. Now the *Mercury* is to be incorporated in a younger, more experimental, journal, *Life and Letters To-Day,* which is edited by a protégé of Squire's, Robert Herring. *Life and Letters To-Day* is a coterie organ. The influential and authoritative critical journals are now reduced to four —*The Times Literary Supplement, The Spectator, The New Statesman and Nation,* and *Time and Tide,* with *John O'London's Weekly* successfully catering to more "popular" taste.

The only controversy of a purely literary nature this spring concerns Somerset Maugham's new novel, "Christmas Holiday." Seldom can there have been such sharp divergence of critical opinion. Frank Swinnerton, Howard Spring, and a majority of the chief critics have praised it in high terms. James Agate and some of the younger critics have expressed keen disappointment in it. Some praise its technical virtuosity; others call it an artistic failure. Some extol its perfection of style; others say it is written in clichés. The theme shocks or exalts some readers; to others it is jejune and outmoded. I suspect that few of the critics have understood Maugham's purpose.

This goes also for T. S. Eliot's modern-dress verse drama, "The Family Reunion," which has not had a good reception from the dramatic critics, though some of the literary critics describe it as an advance on "Murder in the Cathedral."

The only discovery of the season is a beautifully written novel about Himalaya by Rumer Godden, "Black Narcissus." Watch Wales, however. There are several young and as yet undisciplined talents emerging from this neglected field. Some vigorous verse and prose is appearing in an ill-printed periodical called *Wales,* which is published from a Welsh farmhouse by Keidrych Rhys. Its outstanding contributor is the erratic and nightmarish young poet Dylan Thomas, who is publishing a book of mixed verse and stories in the summer. He is going to be talked about.

Tailpieces . . . Rare book prices offer exceptional bargains just now. This is the moment to buy eighteenth-century first editions; a recent catalogue from McLeish, of Little Russell Street, is packed with rare items at rock-bottom prices . . . Blackwell's world-famed bookshop in Broad Street, Oxford, has been re-designed and enlarged—a bookman's paradise . . . Geoffrey Faber, chief of Faber & Faber, becomes President of the Publishers' Association . . . His Master's Voice Gramophone Company is issuing sets of records of modern verse spoken by leading actors and actresses . . . The book trade is contemplating the employment of Tom Harrison's "Mass Observation" organization to examine reading habits. Some regard this much-discussed method of social study as a valuable scientific inquiry; others share the view of humorist Timothy Shy, who calls it "sixpennorth of eye-lotion" . . . Such was the success of the November Book Fair that another will be held this year, on a larger scale, at Olympia, preceding the renowned Bertram Mills Circus.

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A Reader's Almanac

(Continued from page 11)

up with the apparent source of Roosevelt administration expedients. *The New Deal in Old Rome* is curious reading.

MAY 24th

☞*New York—Fair or No Fair* by Marjorie Hillis, who told the girls how to Live Alone and Like It, is intended for visitors who'd rather see modern city life than be led to statues by the usual guide. ☞And speaking of guides, the selection of new ones is enormous.

MAY 25th

☞For would-be sculptors, *The Sculptor's Way* by Brenda Putnam is lavishly illustrated instruction.

MAY 29th

☞*Men Can Take It,* says Elizabeth ("Fashion Is Spinach") Hawes, who now gives us an opus on gents' furnishings.

MAY 31st

☞Harry Franck still trudging remote paths and reporting entertainingly. *The Lure of Alaska* is the new one.

MAY (Date Uncertain)

☞The Right Honorable Neville Chamberlain's explanation of recent events will be rushed to press as soon as the copy's all in and, so the publicity goes, very recent comment will be cabled over. *In Search of Peace* will be the title. We're curious. ☞Major George Fielding Eliot, who probably can secure any number of appropriate book titles from the national anthem, discusses the real and unreal threats of air attack in *Bombs Bursting in Air.* There's been a lot of hooey broadcast on the subject. ☞Clayton Rawson's successor to *Death from a Top Hat* brings back the Great Merlini in another first-rate baffler, *The Footprints on the Ceiling.*

JUNE

☞What with war jitters added to the vagueness of futures normally to be met among publishers' schedules, we can do no more than list books of presumable Importance. John Dos Passos's *Adventures of a Young Man* is announced for the 1st. ☞Sure fire both as to date and quality is *The Brandons* by Angela Thirkell. It's due on the 1st and the lady really does things in the light novel field. ☞*Inside Asia* in which John Gunther will report is another for the early June list. ☞And so is Vincent Sheean's *Not Peace but a Sword,* on Europe in 1938, coming June 9th. ☞And the late Thomas Wolfe's *The Web and the Rock,* which may strongly recall *Look Homeward, Angel,* is slated for the 22nd. ☞The return of Hollywood's Ben Hecht with *A Book of Miracles* will occur early in the month. It's fantastic short stories, not too impressive.

☞*Next to Valour* by John Jennings: long historical novel about Scottish boy who gets into French and Indian war. ☞Another historical novel, *Gamble's Hundred,* by Clifford W. Dowdey, about early Virginia with building of Richmond as background. ☞Clyde Brion Davis's third novel (following *The Anointed* and *"The Great American Novel"*) is *Nebraska Coast,* pioneer story, coming June 12. ☞*The Creeps,* by Anthony Abbot, whodunit.

☞*The foregoing list attempts to hit high spots, not to be all-inclusive. Inevitable changes of publication dates after we go to press, as well as omissions and errors, are apologized for in advance.*

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 265)

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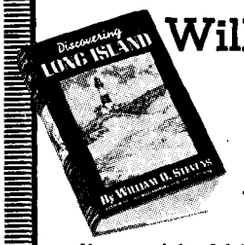

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The New Religion of Nationalism

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE WORLD SINCE 1918. *By J. Hampden Jackson. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.* 1939. $3.

Reviewed by RAYMOND J. SONTAG

PROBABLY because almost all books on recent history become antiquated within a year or two, Mr. Jackson's publishers state that, while based on "The Post-War World" which appeared four years ago, this is "virtually a new book." It is not. Not only the material on the years from 1918 to 1935, but even the conclusions of the earlier book, are here reprinted practically unchanged. Mr. Jackson has merely added a survey of events since 1935. The remarkable fact is that he needed to do no more to produce the best short interpretative history of the last two decades.

Throwing overboard the liberal hope that nationalism was a passing madness, Mr. Jackson has made the spread and intensification of nationalism throughout the world the center of his story. Like all religions, he argues, nationalism has its dark, irrational side. He gives proper emphasis to the efforts of social groups to use nationalism for their own selfish purposes. "Yet nationalism, and nationalism alone in our generation, has kept alive the sense of social pride and independence and the instinct for continuity with the past, without which all political associations are hollow."

Guided by this conviction, he has written a book which has coherence, as well as one which has the usual virtue of confidence in the future. He faithfully sets down the excesses of Fascists, Nazis, and Bolsheviks, but he looks behind and beyond the excesses to discover how the people of Italy, Germany, and Russia got that way. In studying Russia he is less concerned with Communist theory than with the purposes driving on the Russian people, and he concludes that the revolution in Russia was "one of the many Oriental revolutions against the exploitation of the Western Powers and of the privileged classes." In studying Italy and Germany, he brushes aside the plots of capitalists as irrelevant details: "The theory that emerges from these pre-Fascism conditions and post-Fascism practices is that man desires national unity more than liberty, and strength before toleration—national unity and strength being attainable only by the subordination of all activities to the State."

Throughout the world the upsurge of this new religion of nationalism is traced. The result is a coherent and vivid picture, the colors of which are still fresh today, and into which the events of the last four years have been skillfully incorporated. It is a picture which should be studied by those groping to understand the past and despairing of the future. They will come away with new understanding and new confidence.

Raymond J. Sontag is professor of history at Princeton.

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Ideologies

POLITICAL THOUGHT: THE EUROPEAN TRADITION. By J. P. Mayer in coöperation with R. H. S. Crossman, P. Kecskemeti, E. Kohn-Bramstedt, C. J. S. Sprigge. New York: The Viking Press. 1939. $4.

Reviewed by CRANE BRINTON

A GROUP of men can run a business, or a college, or a football team; indeed you cannot think of these except as group enterprises. It is, however, very hard, if not impossible, for a group of men to write a book. Of the dozens of collaborative works of our time, beginning with the "Cambridge Modern History," very few have been full successes, unless indeed they frankly pretended to be no more than anthologies or collected studies. Mr. Mayer and his collaborators have certainly aimed in this book at a kind of unified treatment of what they call the European tradition in political thought, and they have, in spite of their common sympathies for "democratic" as opposed to "totalitarian" states, certainly failed to bring it off. Their book is spotty and uneven, not merely because the contributors vary in their ability to write, but also because they vary in what they write about as "political thought."

Mr. Mayer, who accounts for perhaps half the book—political thought in the Western world from the Greeks through the seventeenth century, in modern Germany, in modern Russia, and finally a brief Epilogue—is himself subject to such variation as to lead one to doubt whether he is one man or several. His work on ancient and medieval thought is a rather confused bit of scissors-and-paste editing, usually from impeccable sources, but lacking in neatness and authority; his chapter on German political thought is excellent, particularly in its interweaving of German history with German ideas; his chapter on Russian political thought is unduly brief and non-committal. Mr. Crossman contributes one of the best chapters in the book, though it is hardly in line with the others. He provides nothing like a history, or even a sketch, of political thinking in England, but a provocative series of very general reflections on the Englishman as a political animal and on England's place in the history of our Western society. He belongs to the liberalism-is-dead-what-shall-we-put-in-its-place school nowadays so popular among English intellectuals; but here he specifically repudiates Laski's Marxism and Aldous Huxley's pacifism as being no more than "emotional reactions to crisis." Mr. Kohn-Bramstedt's chapter on France is the best bit of expositional writing in the book, always careful to keep ideas in the historical setting where they belong, and avoiding both extremes of intellectualism and anti-intellectualism in his treatment of the role of ideas in life. Mr. Kecskemeti does not rise beyond the level of competence in his chapter on the United States, and Mr. Sprigge sometimes falls rather below that level in his treatment of modern Italian political thought.

This is hardly the book to compete with Mr. Sabine's recent "History of Political Theory"—though comparison with that admirable book implies a very high standard indeed. But it has at least two virtues. It is largely the work of scholars of Central European background, and in its notes and bibliographies it brings to American readers a host of names, many of which have not yet penetrated as far as they deserve to into the minds of educated Americans. And, confused and uneven though it is, the book does help bring home the fact that what we may call loosely Western democracy has a long tradition of far greater intellectual respectability than any similar tradition the totalitarian states may appeal to.

Astral Fluid

SIGHT UNSEEN: A JOURNALIST VISITS THE OCCULT. By Frederick G. Lieb. New York: Harper & Bros. 1939. $2.50.

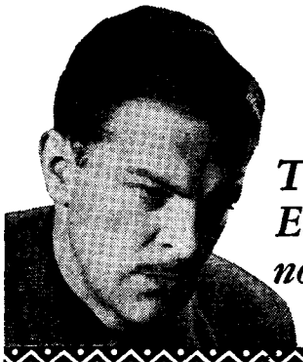
Reviewed by JOHN MULHOLLAND

ANYONE who follows baseball will already know Mr. Lieb, whose sports column was a feature in many papers for years, it seems that during the several decades when he spent his afternoons in the press boxes of ball parks, his spare time was occupied in studying the more spectacular forms of religion. This book is an account of what he found and the conclusions he has reached. His book throughout its two hundred and fifty pages is most interesting, although it must be noted that some readers, partisan in their religious beliefs, probably will have apoplexy.

He believes that unclean spirits from the other world do possess weakened minds; that "concentrated thought sent out on the earth's magnetic waves, especially by those schooled in black magic, can have most deleterious effects"; that some Gypsy fortune-tellers are truly psychic; that we have countless lives; that Mark Antony has told him true tales of the future via a Ouija board: that without a medium, spirit voices came to him through a trumpet; that Spiritualism teaches immortality as a demonstrable fact but that the soul does not at death achieve infinite wisdom; that some of the modern cult leaders practice black magic; and he believes that in all his investigations he never "was swayed from the path of common sense."

Mr. Lieb's experiences and conclusions are not only interesting but thought-provoking. It is too bad, however, that he had to fan at the curved ball that has fooled so many others who peeked into the occult—confusing legerdemain and power—for it leads one to question his judgment at other times. Friends told him of the East Indian fakir who "will drop a seed into the ground, water it, throw his cloak over it, and the spectator will see the plant come through the ground, leaf, flower and even fruit." This is not the result, as you suggest, Mr. Lieb, of "astral fluid" but is merely a feat of conjuring. If it is any solace to you, sir, Madame Blavatsky fanned on that one too.

John Mulholland is the author of "Beware Familiar Spirits."



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Between Two Ages

THE SUN AT NOON. Three Biographical Sketches. By Kenneth B. Murdock. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1939. $2.75.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

"THOUGH in the wayes of fortune or understanding or conscience thou have been benighted till now . . . now God comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, not as in the bud of the spring, but as the Sun at noon." So John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, who knew something, himself, of the ways of the benighted, promised his seventeenth century hearers. When Donne preached, the economy of a thousand years was breaking up, the immemorial way of life was tangibly crumbling, and with it the old loyalties, the ancient certitudes. The Age of Faith was dead, the Age of Reason still to come. In the confused struggle of classes and ideas, in a world slipped loose from its moorings and adrift, the generation who listened to Donne and the two generations who followed sought desperately for lost bearings, for something certain to follow and believe. Professor Murdock has here studied the lives of three members of England's ruling class who in the three generations between Donne and Locke spent themselves in that passionate search, each in a different way, and each in a way typical to some extent of the time.

These three biographical sketches are of unequal length and finality. That of Elizabeth Cary, the eccentric Viscountess Falkland, who found in a return to the certainties of Roman Catholicism full compensation for hardship and neglect, is little more than a prologue to the life of her famous son, while that of John Wilmot, the wicked Earl of Rochester, is but a brilliant pendant to the study of the Falklands. Elizabeth Cary's name will be unfamiliar to most readers. To choose her instead of some more famous convert to typify those who were drawn back to Rome was a happy inspiration, and, avoiding the easy opportunities for flippancy, Professor Murdock has succeeded in making her a real and engaging figure. But her conversion, the heart of her story, gets less attention than her absent-minded housekeeping, and little is added to our understanding of one important cross-current in seventeenth century England.

Professor Murdock deals more fully with Elizabeth's son Lucius, Viscount Falkland, who withdrew from the turmoil of Charles I's reign to seek in studies guided by reason an answer to the religious problems of his age, who emerged to counsel tolerance and moderation to the revolutionaries of the Long Parliament, and who died at Newbury, fighting for a cause he only half believed in. Falkland occupies two-thirds of the whole book, a space just long enough to make us wish it much longer. Something of the charm of his character is suggested, something of the baffled tragedy of his life, but, perhaps in a modest reluctance to tire his readers, Professor Murdock skirts delicately the knotty problems of theology and politics with which Falkland grappled, and one is left too often with the feeling that one is reading learned and witty footnotes to a missing text. The last essay, on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, is the best. Human nature being what it is, one may be bored or puzzled by Falkland's intricate reasonableness or his mother's stubborn piety, but everyone likes watching the rake's progress. Relieved of most of the burden of explanation, Professor Murdock can go straight to his task of interpreting the Restoration satirist in terms of the seventeenth century quest for "the sun at noon." In doing so he not only produces a shrewd, sympathetic, and illuminating commentary on Rochester and his times, but draws together his whole book into a welcome unity.

On the whole these three studies, scholarly, intelligent, and urbane, are no more than half satisfactory. In undertaking to write a popular study of seventeenth century religious temperaments, the writer undertakes to interest the reader in minds which worked in terms of theology. These days that is not easy. But once the challenge is accepted, the problem should be met, not avoided, no matter with what deftness and grace.

Garrett Mattingly, professor of history at Long Island University, is at work on a biography of Catherine of Aragon.

Yes!

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Lines across the Sea

STEAM CONQUERS THE ATLANTIC. By David Budlong Tyler. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. $5.

Reviewed by ROBERT G. ALBION

THIS readable study of transatlantic steam navigation down to 1880 surpasses all previous works on the subject in the intelligent thoroughness of its analysis. Not only does Mr. Tyler present clearly the steady growth of the liners in size and speed, as his numerous predecessors had done, but he also breaks virgin ground in explaining so thoroughly why the various lines came into being and why a few prospered where many others failed. His detailed and interesting explanations of what went on behind the scenes should give his book a prominent and permanent place in the history of North Atlantic shipping. It seems a more substantial contribution than Commander Angas's "Rivalry on the Atlantic" which appeared just before it, covering twice as long a period in about half as much space, and useful chiefly for its description of the development of marine engines. Mr. Tyler describes those too, along with almost every other aspect of the steamship business.

It is perhaps natural that a native and resident of Brooklyn, spending most of his life within sound of foghorns, should develop a lively interest in the background of the great ships which pass so close to Brooklyn shores. His enthusiasm for the subject has enabled him to run down question after question in a tremendous amount of widespread sources and to present his findings in a manner which should capture both the interest of the general reader and the respect of the scholar.

One of the most valuable of his contributions is the analysis of the hitherto obscure machinations which led to the granting and withdrawal of governmental subsidies both at Washington and at London. Many previous writers have hurried over those formative days of government aid to shipping; the story as it unfolds here reveals that many of the present-day arguments were being presented almost word for word eighty years or so ago. The political interpretations of the rise and fall of official favor toward the Collins and Galway lines make likely reading, though one wishes that the author had emerged from the *Congressional Record* long enough to devote a half page to describing the magnificent manner in which Collins dined and wined two steamer-loads of legislators aboard the *Baltic* just before his subsidy was more than doubled in 1852.

In his treatment of the Cunard Line, Mr. Taylor does not share all the partisan enthusiasm of Babcock's "Spanning the Atlantic," devoted exclusively to that great organization. He explains ably why Collins failed even with generous subsidies and why Inman succeeded without subsidies, thanks to his foresighted pioneering with iron hulls, screw propellers, and immigrants, aided by shrewd management and money borrowed at low interest. Though there is no estimate of the total, one is appalled at the amount of money risked and lost by investors in the lines which failed.

The publishers deserve congratulations for their part in making this an excellent book. There are large numbers of well-selected contemporary pictures; detailed source references at the end of each chapter; several interesting appendices; and an extensive though uncritical bibliography. The book stands in marked contrast to some of the hastily-compiled popularizing of the subject, and the author deserves well both in royalties and in reputation.

Balanced Instrument

IN DREAMS BEGIN RESPONSIBILITIES. By Delmore Schwartz. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions. 1938. $2.50.

Reviewed by DUDLEY FITTS

TWO of the most important recent books of verse are this one and William Carlos Wililams's "Collected Poems," and it is to the lasting credit of the editor of *New Directions* that he has brought out both of them. His blurb claims for Mr. Schwartz "a commanding place among the imaginative writers of the day," and for once a blurb is just. In the story which opens this book, and in the lyrics which make up the third section, the author displays not only a mastery of technic that is precisely suited to his poems' intention, but also a rare sensitivity of perception, an urgent humanity, and such an honesty of expression as is rare in a day when the manners of poetry ape the sliding faithless manners of international diplomacy. It is hard to believe that this is a first book, the work of a very young man.

The collection is made up of a short story, a long philosophical poem based on "Coriolanus," a group of lyrics, and a verse play. The story and the lyrics are completely successful; the long poem is less so. The play is interesting for its ideas and for its beautifully modulated diction, but it fails as a play because it is not conceived in terms of stage speech: like "Coriolanus and His Mother," it is both too exuberant and too discursive—as though Mr. Schwartz had told himself, "Time's short. I *must* cram into this poem, this play, every fact, every image, every idea, every bit of technical apparatus that I can muster." The result is arresting, but topheavy. The story and the lyrics, however, are perfectly proportioned. One is never conscious of the devices as such. In the story, for instance, the device is a movie which the "I" attends, and this movie turns out to be the story of his father's and mother's courtship. This is clever, and in less capable hands it would have remained no more than clever; but as Mr. Schwartz uses it, it becomes the completely controlled instrument that transforms what might have been a conventional adolescent nostalgia into a longing and a pity that are universals. The same thing can be said of the technical brilliance of the short poems. Almost without exception they achieve the equilibrium between Thing Said and Way of Saying that is the mark of the finest poetry.

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The New Books

Art

SCULPTURE INSIDE AND OUT. By Malvina Hoffman. Norton. 1939. $3.75.

Students professionally interested in sculpture, and those persistently curious readers willing to cope with technical intricacies, must not be discouraged by Miss Hoffman's rather platitudinous remarks, in Part One of this book, concerning sculpture in general. Part Two, comprising three-fourths of the volume, describes the materials and processes of the sculptor, the kinds of knowledge which are indispensable to him, the correct method of making armatures, of enlarging and reducing, of direct carving and of casting,—topics far from dull in the hands of a woman who knows, down to the most minute detail, the "cuisine" of the art she practices, but never forgets, or allows the reader to forget, that it is an art. These chapters, dealing not only with the studio but with the stone yard, the foundry, and the kiln, include what the publisher justly calls "the most remarkable collection of photographs dealing with the craftsmanship of sculpture ever published in America," a series which visually demonstrates the techniques described in the text. The book contains, in addition to these, reproductions of work by practically every important sculptor of our time, a total of no less than two hundred and seventy-six illustrations.

O. L.

Fiction

CAREER BY PROXY. By Faith Baldwin. Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. $2.

Turning from the problem of the poor little poor girl, which was the theme of her preceding novel, Miss Baldwin explores the no less romantic woes of the poor little millionairess. Like all the rest of Miss Baldwin's heroines, Joan is lovely and spirited and intelligent and amusing and presentable, with just enough unconventionality to add excitement. Like all the rest, too, she is embarrassed by a richness of choice in suitors. Shall it be the childhood playmate, rich, amiable, but never thrilling? Shall it be the fascinating older man, whose wife is intermittently insane? Shall it be any of the boys at the office? Or shall it be that nice shabby young doctor with the thin tired face and the Ideals? Maybe you can guess, but even so, foreknowledge won't spoil your pleasure in Miss Baldwin's habitual smooth and pleasant skill.

K. S.

DATELINE EUROPE. By Leonard Ross. Harcourt, Brace. 1939. $2.

"A girl in Paris smells a rat in a fashion shop—and Balkan history hangs in the balance." That is the way the hero describes it. The heroine, Paula Flanton, lovely blonde newspaper woman, regards it as a sort of Graustark adventure written up by E. Phillips Oppenheim. That will give you a rough idea. But it is Graustark—called Belgovenia, this time —with the romance on the outside of the cake, and a lot of beautiful pink icing taken from the stirring-bowl of the "I saw it happen" school.

Paula, impecunious but as smart as a combination whip and steel trap, is determined to get both a by-line and Peter Strake, internationally noted correspondent who, with that big-hearted ease characteristic of traveling newspaper men, not only reports news but makes it happen. Jerry (for Geraldine) Mannering already has Peter, and lots of money to

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The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
RENO RENDEZVOUS *Leslie Ford* (Farrar & Rinehart: $2.)	Handsome Reno parasite punctured with miner's candlestick. Hat-check girl garroted. Reliable firm of Primrose and Buck takes over.	Loose luxury of divorcity lushly portrayed. Intricate plot clashes through startling situations to sizzling finish. Detecting a bit reminiscent but well handled.	Re-notable
SPRING HARROWING *Phoebe Atwood Taylor* (Norton: $2.)	Cape Cod "sullegomaniac" slain with "wagh nahk" (help). Girl also succumbs. Asey Mayo rises to occasion.	Plentiful supply of slightly balmy characters; copious chuckles; gallons of atmosphere; and puzzle that is 99% air-tight.	Prime
DEAD FOR A DUCAT *Helen Reilly* (Crime Club: $2.)	Aged Connecticuty-coon's cousin killed with hypodermic. Oldster also envenomed. Dun-colored detective Todhunter flits about.	Oft-thwarted and highly emotional romance closely linked with murders, keeps yarn at somewhat enervating boiling point.	Feverish
A MAGNET FOR MURDER *M. E. Corne* (M. S. Mill: $2.)	Vicious old magnate poisoned at movies. Other deaths follow, all solved by "Mac" MacIntyre.	Featuring new and amazing way to kill at a distance. Major part of yarn too lurid to carry much conviction.	Tollable
THE MUSSOLINI MURDER PLOT *Bernard Newman* (Hillman-Curl: $2.)	Mr. Newman masquerades as Il Duce, saves him from kidnappers, goes home to London with The Girl.	Completely unbelievable plot dished up with dexterous verisimilitude — except for incredible American.	Thriller

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boot. And in Belgovenia a would-be dictator is planning a coup—a coup toward which Paula's rat keeps running as fast as he can with Paula, and Peter, at his tail. Three guesses as to what happens. The story rolls along, gathering momentum as it goes, and the characters keep accumulating nobility until everything just naturally bursts at the end. But have no fear. The pieces all fall into exactly the right position.

Anyone with a taste for adventure who believes that human life began with Vincent Sheean and Negley Farson will find this good going.

R. H.

VALEDICTORY. By MacKinlay Kantor. Coward-McCann. 1939. $1.

A homely little short story of an old school janitor who has proved through years a practical influence for the good in the world of young people over which he presides. Somewhat ostensibly a "tear-jerker," this short story (originally, we think, appearing in *The Saturday Evening Post*) is handled pleasingly by a writer already widely known for many longer books. It should be deservedly popular with simple people. Amos Sewell's illustrations fit harmoniously into the text.

W. R. B.

PEACE, IT'S WONDERFUL. By William Saroyan. Modern Age. 1939. 50c.

The need of every human being for pity and love and understanding and protection—that is the underlying theme of all the stories in this new Saroyan collection. At his best, Mr. Saroyan makes very moving his picture of the "chaos and unrest and agony and magnificence of this place of man." At his worst—and unfortunately his percentage of failure is high—he is anecdotal and repetitious, and sentimental as only the hard-boiled writer can be.

K. S.

SHAKE DOWN THE STARS. By Harriet Henry. Dutton. 1939. $2.50.

Legation life in Santo Domingo forms a new setting for an old conflict in this latest novel by Harriet Henry. Mrs. George Wetherell Quest, a socially prominent, middle-aged widow, has never discovered that her little world does not revolve about herself. When her daughter falls instantly and completely in love with a young diplomat who has the courage to marry her and carry her off to his post at Trujillo City, the mother follows them and the battle is on. It is the struggle between the generations: the younger fighting for independence, the older fighting actually for dependence and the power that such dependence brings. After some highly dramatic incidents between husband and mother-in-law beneath the smooth veneer of social life in the little tropical city, the young couple bring off a coup d'état which insures them a free future. Written brightly, with some feeling for sharp character contrast, "Shake down the Stars" seldom dips below the surface, content with its obvious role of light entertainment.

G. G.

Miscellaneous

I TRAVEL BY TRAIN. By Rollo Walter Brown. Appleton-Century. 1939. $3.

This is a collection of observations and *reportages*, often shrewd, on a very considerable number of American scenes and people. Poverty and what its existence on the American scale implies with regard to the future of democracy is the subject that particularly engages Mr. Brown. He never fails to pay obeisance to the beauties of this pleasant land, but he is most interested in two classes of people—those aging under such a crust of hopelessness as to have lost their tactile sense toward beauty, and those young ones who are climbing out of poverty up the ladder of education.

As long as Mr. Brown is observing them the book is splendid, but he insists on serving his observations with a sauce of comment, often so superficial as to suggest he holds the view that because a man has good eyesight he should become a banjo player. In one specific instance he has caught beautifully the drive, boom, and thrust of the Oklahoma oil fields, and contrasted it with the decay of the coal mining regions, but he never thinks of connecting the rise of one with the decline of the other. In the general case he observes that democracy confronts formidable obstacles, but deduces that the only hope for it lies in Marxian economics and the extension of universal education. Of course, it may be true; but it will not be proved by such a standing broad jump from such data.

F. P.

THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE. By George E. Sokolsky. Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. $2.

In a fortunately not overly-thick volume, Mr. George E. Sokolsky has written a eulogy on advertising under a title that might, to those unacquainted with the author's sometimes remarkable versatility, at first be slightly confusing. For the "American Way of Life," according to Mr. Sokolsky, is not only the best in the world, but is the direct result of that other American institution: advertising. Preferably advertising unhampered by any governmental regulations. Three quotations will serve to give the factual tone of the work.

> Events in Europe conclusively prove that the American way, in spite of wars, depressions, confusing policies and politics, provides a more secure, a more comfortable, a more convenient, and particularly a freer way of life than any other on earth.
>
> A free press must be a solvent press.
>
> In China, things tend to be stabilized; here, we tend to be progressive. . . . Of course, as the Chinese go in for advertising, they will come out on the progressive side, too.

The author goes on to buttress his deductions with a brilliant series of chapters depicting the commercial life of the orange, the tomato, cosmetics, and flush-toilets (with sani-seats). Throughout he maintains the keen, analytical objectivity in dealing with the more controversial aspects of advertising that one has heretofore encountered only in the writings of that other profound sociologist, Mr. Bruce Barton.

In this year of tension, when conflicting political ideologies threaten not only world peace, but civilization as well, Mr. Sokolsky's contribution occupies a unique place in the library of world affairs. The introduction to the book helps to identify that place. For the foreword is written, and most appropriately, too, by Mr. Fulton Oursler, editor-in-chief of the great American publicist, Mr. Bernarr Macfadden.

J. H. S.

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PERSONALS

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THE ARBUTUS PATCH, W. Tisbury, Martha's Vineyard, for rent July-August to small family or few women. Bring car for pleasant vacation—with trips to the Fair, if you must. References exchanged. Box 216-D.

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SRLish CALIFORNIENNE, young, contemplating Hawaiian summer alone, invites correspondence. Box 213-D.

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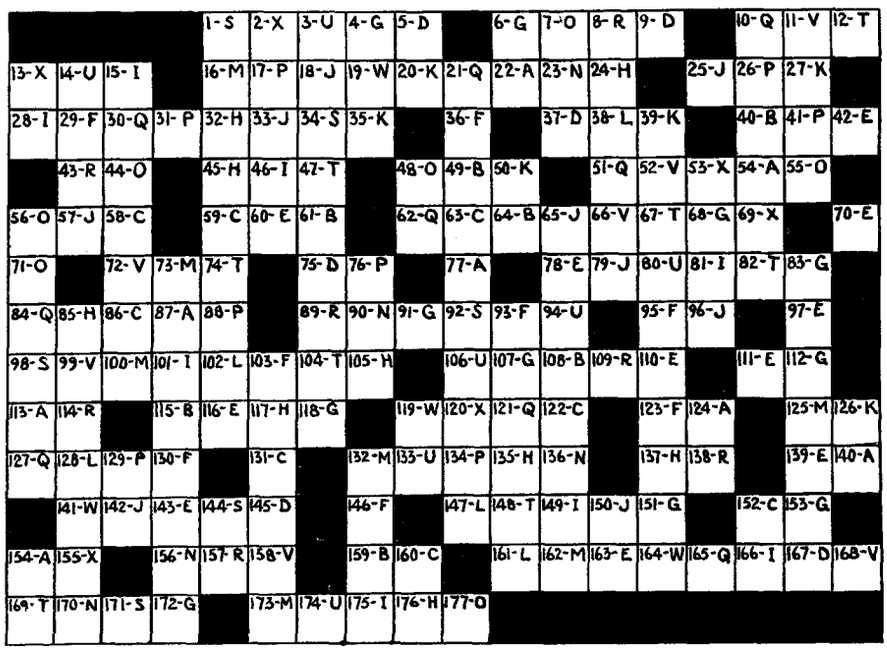
Double-Crostics: No. 266

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY



DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle, you must guess twenty-four words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 25 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Divination by mice movements.
B. Sensitiveness to pain.
C. Opera by Puccini.
D. 24th asteroid.
E. Brought into consonance.
F. Belief in ghosts as affecting man.
G. Historical drama by Schiller.
H. Hedge (slang).
I. Notorious Russian court favorite.
J. Unjustly discriminating.
K. Homeric epithet for Hera (comp.).
L. Fast-moving.
M. Blemish.
N. Strong intuitive impression (colloq.).
O. Turkish title of respect.
P. German romantic composer.
Q. Bearable.
R. Personification of Queen Elizabeth.
S. Somewhat crude.
T. Capable of being moved by entreaty.
U. Thinness; meagerness.
V. Handicraftsman.
W. Abundantly furnished.
X. Members of a race of brutes (Gulliver's Travels).

WORDS

A. 154 124 22 113 77 54 87 140
B. 40 115 108 61 64 159 49
C. 59 63 58 131 160 122 152 86
D. 145 9 5 37 75 167
E. 60 70 139 163 78 111 143 97 110 116 42
F. 130 146 103 95 29 36 93 123
G. 6 91 172 4 83 153 68 118 151 107 112
H. 135 85 24 32 105 117 137 45 176
I. 15 175 166 28 101 81 149 46
J. 65 96 150 79 25 142 57 33 18
K. 126 39 27 50 35 20
L. 102 128 161 38 147
M. 100 16 162 132 73 173 125
N. 136 23 170 156 90
O. 177 71 56 55 44 48 7
P. 17 129 88 26 134 31 76 41
Q. 165 121 84 21 127 51 62 10 30
R. 89 114 138 8 109 43 157
S. 34 171 1 92 98 144
T. 47 74 169 148 104 12 82 67
U. 174 94 106 14 3 80 133
V. 11 158 52 168 72 99 66
W. 141 19 164 119
X. 155 120 2 13 53 69

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

AMONG his random reading lately Old Q. came upon some of the juvenilia of Robert Louis Stevenson. There he found a piece called *The Philosophy of Umbrellas* written by young RLS while a student at Edinburgh. It was printed in the *Edinburgh University Magazine,* February, 1871. Listen:—

> One who bears with him an umbrella —such a complicated structure of whalebone, of silk, and of cane, that it becomes a very microcosm of modern industry—is necessarily a man of peace . . . a 6 and 20 shilling silk umbrella is a possession too precious to be adventured in the shock of war.

☞No, surely there won't be a War because none of the broadcasters can pronounce Balkan or Polish names. ☞A specially pleasant adventure was meeting Mrs. Belloc Lowndes at the revival of *Nine Pine Street,* a play based on the Lizzie Borden case, now running at the Federal theatre in Roslyn, L. I. (and most admirably directed and performed). Mrs. Lowndes, whose *Lizzie Borden: A Study in Conjecture,* had been published the day before, spent her last evening in the U. S. at this play. ☞When Miss Virgilia Chew, the Lizzie of the piece, came on (in the epilogue) in a blue high-neck billowing organdy (?) gown, era of 1907, Old Penseroso nearly swooned with nostalgia. ☞The number of publicity bulletins Old Q. has received, conclusively demonstrating which of the two rival translations of *Mein Kampf* is the more accurate, Aryan, cultured, or whatnot, would stack up as high as a ten-foot pole. ☞A few ten-foot Poles would be useful along the Baltic. ☞Best of all the *Mein Kampf* comedies is the reprint put out in tabloid-newspaper style by some Connecticut printer who touts it as both Unexpurgated and Condensed. ☞Columbia's six-volume *Letters of R. W. Emerson* contains 4,374 letters of which 2,313 have never before been printed. ☞We have suddenly done a multiplication and realized that in a literate lifetime of 50 years, if one wrote only a letter a day, the total would be 18,250. ☞It's too many, and we shall bear that in mind. ☞Ben Abramson, chrysostom of the Argus Bookshop in Chicago, recently spent an unusual week—almost silent, with laryngitis. During that time he concocted a new monthly bulletin, the first issue of which will shortly appear. Title *The Bibliodisiac's Bouquet.* ☞In Chicago very briefly, Old Q. met Mr. Kroch and Miss Gretchen in the act of returning, very brunette with sunshine, from a Caribbean vacation; and saw Mr. Eddie Ziegler off on *The Hiawatha* (a train as svelte and well-tailored as Mr. Z. himself) for the Twin Cities.

☞Speaking of travellers, two met in Washington recently. Jonathan Daniels *(A Southerner Discovers the South)* met Van Wyck Brooks *(The Flowering of New England).* ☞Mr. Brooks was on his way to write a book about the South, and Mr. Daniels en route to write about New England. ☞We learn from an advance bulletin of James F. Drake, Inc. that there is to be a book about Matthew Arnold by Chauncey Tinker and H. F. Lowry. ☞And a book about Stella Benson (bless her) by R. Ellis Roberts. ☞We get metathesis (or is it Spoonerism) on very meagre provocation: why do we always murmur Ishtopher Crisherwood?

☞Townsend Scudder III, whose admirable biography of Jane Welsh Carlyle will have many delighted readers, is one of the innumerable alumni of the old Doubleday outfit. He has since taught English at Yale and Swarthmore, and is now trying to build a garden on a rocky hillside at Yelping Hill, Connecticut, in that pensive colony of philosopher-naturalists founded by Henry S. Canby. Yelping Hill is said to combine all the merriments of the Hartford Wits and the Philadelphia Ritz.

☞Thos. Cook & Son, the good old Wagon-Lits representative, offer a $50 Traveller's Cheque (with a Que) for the best letter of 300 words on *A Book That Persuades Me To Travel.* Barbara Frost, their active fuglewoman, asked Old Q. to be one of the judges, but we once wrote a book about Travel ourself and thought maybe. . . . ☞A book we should really like to see would be the new and enlarged edition of Hilaire Belloc's *Sonnets and Verse* just published by Sheed & Ward ($2.50). ☞We also like the sound of Ronald Knox's *Let Dons Delight,* which suggests the dons of an Oxford college in characteristic conversations in the years 1588, 1638, 1688, 1788, 1838, 1888, and 1938. ☞We have an almost avuncular thrill in hearing that the spirited and informing little book by our Editor Mr. Stevens, *Lincoln's Doctor's Dog,* is to be published in England by Allen & Unwin. Perhaps we should add that this unusual little tractate has nothing to do with Lincoln, doctors, or dogs. ☞If your bookseller can tell you what it's about, he's a good bookseller.

☞Fletcher Pratt writes us a pleasing note: every year the St. Botolph Club of Boston asks its members what magazines they wish the Club to take in. In their requests the S. R. L. led the list, called for by 57 members. ☞Among the others: *Fishing Gazette, Illustrated London News, Manchester Guardian, S. E. P.,* 52 each. *Time,* 50. *Punch,* 46. *La Vie Parisienne,* 27. *Atlantic,* 11. *Our Dumb Animals,* 11. *Yale Review,* 4. *American Mercury,* 2.

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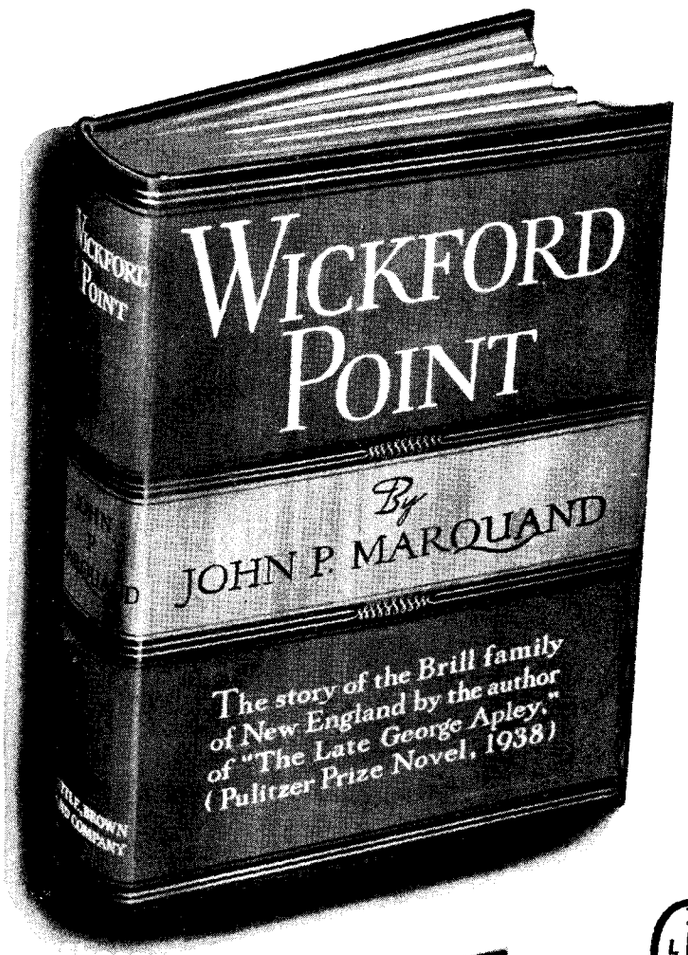
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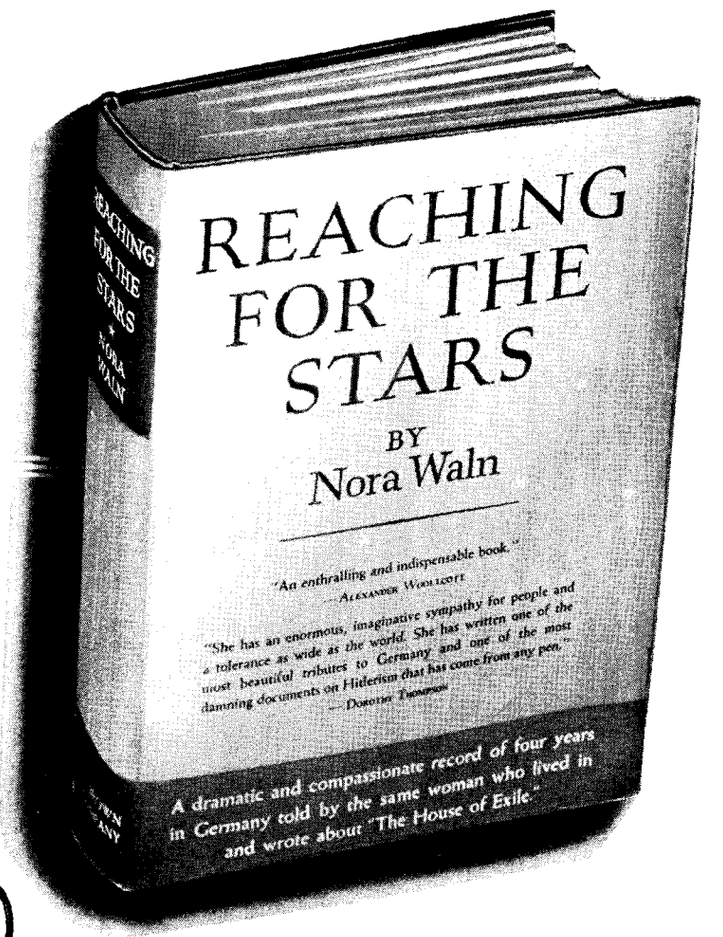
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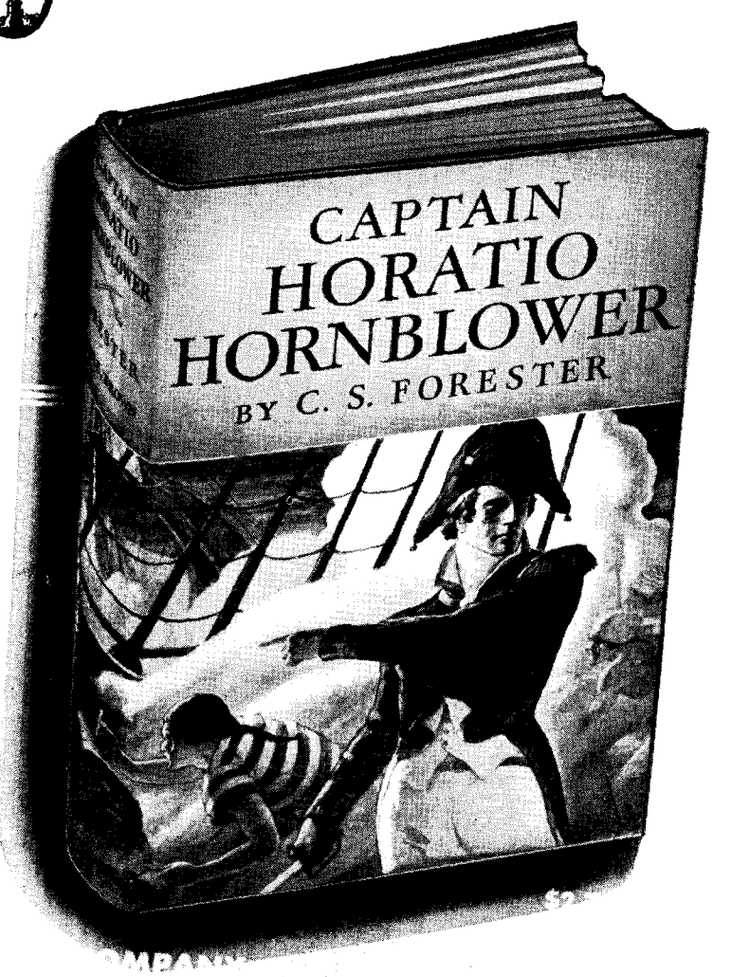

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